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AN







ROBERT J. WILLINGHAM

LIFE  
OF  
ROBERT JOSIAH WILLINGHAM

By HIS DAUGHTER  
ELIZABETH WALTON WILLINGHAM



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TO MY MOTHER



## FOREWORD

R. J. WILLINGHAM was thoroughly surcharged with the passion of giving the gospel to a lost world; surely the story of his life cannot be told without arousing greater missionary interest. If, on account of this book, Southern Baptists shall become more deeply interested in Foreign Missions; if some shall contribute more liberally to the great cause; if one shall give his life in service on the foreign field—then, indeed, the labors of the author will not have been in vain.

THE author wishes hereby to extend her sincere thanks to all who have in any manner assisted in the preparation of this book. Especially would she express her appreciation to Dr. J. F. Love, who first suggested that she undertake this work and has ever encouraged her by his sympathetic counsel; to Dr. T. B. Ray, for his kind interest and timely suggestions; to Dr. W. H. Smith, for his helpful advice and uniform kindness; to Dr. R. H. Pitt, who has graciously given his time to counsel the author and to criticize her manuscript; to Dr. J. C. Metcalf, for his literary suggestions; to Dr. W. A. Harris, for kindness extended her while consulting the files of the *Religious Herald* in the archives of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society; to Dr. B. J. W. Graham, for access to the files of the *Christian Index*; to Mr. J. D. Crump and Mr. J. B. Ferneyhough, for helpful business advice; and to all who have written for the pages of this book. Grateful mention must also be made of the kindness of the late Dr. T. P. Bell, who, more than any one, aided the author in forming a plan for the latter part of the book.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ANCESTRY.

When Robert Josiah Willingham was a young man he was inclined to ridicule family trees and pride in ancestry; as he grew older, however, and his extensive travels throughout the South brought him in contact with many descendants of his early forefathers, this feeling of ridicule gradually changed into an interest in ancestry that grew steadily as the years passed by. From many sources he obtained information in regard to his family; and it became one of his greatest pleasures, in his leisure moments, to work on this material and out of it to evolve a family stream, in which form he preferred to preserve the records. There are many tributaries to this stream, most of them having as their source a colonist from Switzerland, England, Ireland, or France. In so brief a sketch it is possible to mention only a few of those forefathers whose influence can be seen in the life and character of their descendant.

Dr. Willingham's given name can be traced back nine generations to his earliest known ancestor, David Robert, of St. Imer, Switzerland, a descendant of the large Rhobert family of Wales, a family which is noted for its piety and devotion to God's Word. In 1556, soon after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, David Robert and his son Pierre, a Huguenot preacher, the record of whose ordination is still in the old Huguenot church at Basle, Switzerland, came over as exiles for religion's sake, and settled at Santee, South Carolina. Soon after his arrival Pierre Robert became the first pastor of the Huguenot church of that place and served in this capacity until his death. The

church has since died out, but in the old Huguenot church at Charleston is still found a tablet bearing the following inscription :

PASTEUR PIERRE ROBERT

FRENCH SANTEE, SO. CA.

1656

1715

Other ancestors were noted for their religious convictions. One of these was Dr. George Mosse, a graduate of the University of Dublin, who upon leaving Ireland moved to St. Helena Island, near Beaufort, South Carolina. He and his brother-in-law, William Norton, organized a church on this island and were its first deacons. Later, upon moving to Savannah, Georgia, Dr. Mosse became one of the charter members and also senior deacon of the First Baptist Church of Savannah, which was organized by Dr. Henry Holcombe, the great grandfather of Mrs. R. J. Willingham. The old charter of this church, on which appear, among other names, those of Dr. Holcombe and Dr. Mosse, is still in existence.

Three of Dr. Mosse's daughters married brothers belonging to the Lawton family of South Carolina. Benjamin Themistocles D'Ion Lawton, who married the fourth daughter Jane, was a prosperous planter, owning property not only in South Carolina but also in southwest Georgia. For many years he was a deacon in the old Lawtonville Church. His daughter Phebe Sarah married Thomas Willingham, a young man of English descent.

Thomas Willingham's father, Thomas Henry Willingham, a prosperous merchant of Charleston, South Carolina, had died at an early age, leaving him an infant. His mother had later married again. The ample inheritance which his father had left him dwindled during his boyhood, on account of mismanagement, and he found himself ready to

face the world a poor young man. He was not afraid of hard work, however, and, by his own efforts, became one of the wealthiest men in his community. He took the highest stand not only in business and social but also in religious life, serving as deacon in old Lawtonville Church for more than fifty years. His seven sons, influenced by their mother's beautiful life and following their father's example, became deacons in the Baptist church. One of those sons was Benjamin Lawton Willingham, the father of Robert Josiah Willingham.

B. L. Willingham was a man of marked personality; he exerted a great influence over the life of his son, and many of the latter's most prominent characteristics can be seen in him. He was educated at the Citadel, in Charleston, and later spent one year at Madison College, now Colgate University. He cared little for books, but preferred to receive his education through his eyes and ears; he felt no hesitancy in asking about whatever he wished to know. Throughout life this habit clung to him; and, by a few skillful, pointed questions, he could find out what a person "knew." In this way he obtained a wonderful insight into human nature.

The early years of Mr. Willingham's married life were spent as a successful planter in Beaufort and Barnwell Districts. His home, "Gravel Hill," was one of the few handsome homes in this community spared by Sherman. Several years after the close of the war he moved to Macon, Georgia.

Hale and hearty, of buoyant spirits and enthusiastic manner, a charming companion, he became a well-beloved figure in his adopted city, taking a prominent stand in the business world as a cotton factor; in the religious world, as a deacon in the First Baptist Church; and, in the educational world, as a trustee of Mercer University, in which capacity he served for twenty years. He was noted for his liberality toward church, charitable and educational work. Surrounded by the majority of his children and their fami-

lies, he spent his last years as patriarch of a large family, devoted to his descendants and greatly beloved by them all.

While attending the Citadel, Mr. Willingham had met Elizabeth Martha Baynard, a student at Miss Ball's school in Charleston, who later became his wife. She was the daughter of Archibald Calder Baynard, a wealthy planter on the coast of South Carolina, who was known also as a scholar and a member of the Legislature. Her grandfather and others of his family had come over from England and settled on Port Royal and Edisto Islands. At the age of fourteen she had united with the church, having been baptized by Dr. Richard Fuller. Two of her sisters married two of Mr. Willingham's brothers.

As a girl, her life had been free from care; but time proved that she measured up to every responsibility that womanhood brings. She looked well to the ways of her household, managing the large establishment with grace and skill. Her husband had great respect for her judgment and called her his "balance wheel"; often did he consult her opinion about his business problems. Possessed of executive ability and strength of character, she was at the same time modest and retiring, disposed to be reserved rather than talkative, yet possessing the courteous manners peculiar to the old Southern sea coast.

Mrs. Willingham was an ideal mother to her children. Firm, yet gentle, she required implicit obedience. At an early age the principles of law and order and of punctuality were so deeply instilled in their minds that they were never able to be effaced. In the childish disputes, she showed a rare sense of justice, patiently hearing both sides before rendering a decision. A devout Christian of strong and simple faith, she taught her children early in life the old, old story and the importance of the things that really count. As they grew older and left the family home to make homes of their own, her interest in their spiritual

lives never waned. Love was the guiding principle of her life; and she, in turn, was greatly beloved. She was survived by the following children: Thomas H., Phebe (Mrs. C. E. Malone), Calder B., Carrie (Mrs. R. F. Lawton), Robert J., Osgood P., Telie (Mrs. W. S. Payne), Elizabeth (Mrs. W. T. Johnstone), Edward J., Broadus E., Paul D., Pringle E., and Benjamin B. The devotion which she inspired in her children can be seen in an extract from a letter written by a brother of R. J. Willingham only a few months before the latter's death:

"This is the anniversary of Mother's death. Although twenty-seven years have wearily dragged themselves along, yet as fresh in my memory as the morning dewdrop on the petal of the rose is my love and devotion for my sainted mother. I thank God for her."

## CHAPTER II.

### CHILDHOOD.

Robert Josiah Willingham was born on Black Creek plantation, Beaufort District, South Carolina, May 15, 1854. When he was a year old his parents moved to "Gravel Hill," their plantation near Allendale, South Carolina, living for a few years in a six-room cottage, and then building a large home of the old Colonial style. Here Robert spent most of his boyhood, living an active, healthy, out-of-door life; never did he cease to be proud of the fact that he was a "country boy."

"Gravel Hill" was a large plantation, and Mr. Willingham had many slaves; he was a firm but kind master, and was held in high esteem by them. Uncle Jake, one of the most trusted slaves, was noted for his strength. Every year his master offered a new suit of clothes to anyone who could throw him in wrestling. This was always the occasion for a big time, but no one ever won the suit. In those days it was the custom for each son of the family to have a negro boy to wait on him. To Robert was given Uncle Jake's son, Sam, as they were born on the same day, or, according to Uncle Jake, were "one-day chilluns."

Life was bright to Bob as he and his brothers, accompanied by their faithful little negro attendants, raced around the plantation, riding ponies, fishing with bent pins, setting bird traps, or hunting. Nor did he enjoy less the time spent with his sisters, and many a happy Saturday morning did they spend in one of the basement rooms baking tea-cakes—the higher the tea-cakes rose, the more delicious were they considered by Bob. In after years he often said that a good steamboat cook was spoiled when he became a preacher.

December 23 was the birthday of Bob's grandfather, Mr. Thomas Willingham, and the day was always celebrated by a family reunion. The long drive through the country, the meeting of the various cousins and, last but not least the sumptuous dinner, all conspired to make this a never-to-be-forgotten occasion; and, for many years, Bob thought that the Christmas season really began on this date.

One of Dr. Willingham's most effective and earnest sermons was entitled "Family Religion." Perhaps he could speak on this subject so feelingly because he realized how potent an influence in shaping his life had been the religious atmosphere of his home. Both parents were earnest Christians, and believed in training up a child "in the way in which he should go." Family prayers were conducted every day before breakfast and after the evening meal. The petition, "Grant that our children may become useful men and women in society," often ascended from the family altar, and bore fruit in the after life of the children. Calder, an older brother, was once asked how his father had made so good a job of rearing his sons; his answer was, "He prayed for us and whipped us."

On Sunday morning the family attended the Sunday school at Old Concord Church. Mr. Walker Brookes, the superintendent of the Sunday school, not only furnished by his personal life a most excellent example of Christian living, but also knew how to train those under him in the knowledge of the Word of God and in Christian usefulness. From the little company that attended the Sunday school under his administration came not only a great missionary leader, but several of the most liberal missionary givers in the Southern Baptist Convention.

One Sunday morning the children of the Sunday school were assigned by the superintendent the hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," to memorize. As they rode home in the carriage, little Bobbie declared that it was too long

and hard for him to learn. His mother insisted that it was not, promising to help him learn it. Every Sunday morning the little boy repeated the words over and over again after his mother as they rode to and from Sunday school; finally he was able to stand up before the school and repeat the whole hymn from memory. The superintendent and the mother passed away, but the words of that hymn would not leave his mind or heart. As a business man and later as a preacher he heard their insistent appeal, until finally he devoted his life to answering those irresistible words:

"Shall we whose souls are lighted,  
By wisdom from on high,  
Shall we to men benighted  
The light of life deny?"

From his earliest years Bob was devoted to his mother. One day when the duties of a large household seemed especially pressing and she was feeling tired and worried, her sky was brightened by the little fellow running in with two hot roasted potatoes in his blue-checked apron, which he held up to her, saying, "Ma (using the South Carolina flat pronunciation), I brought you these because I love you." His devotion to her was reciprocated; the other children said that he was her eyeball," but never seemed to be jealous of her favoritism. "If there was any discrepancy in the accounts of the disputes between the children, she would sometimes say, "Well, let me call Bobbie; I know he will tell me just how it was." He hated a lie, and was always very careful to tell the truth. So conscientious was he in this respect that sometimes his father, rather provoked by his qualifying phrases, would say, "My son, why do you always say, 'I think'? Don't you *know* anything?" To which the child would reply that he was not absolutely sure and he would hate to tell anything that was not true.



A lovable disposition and a "hard head" are not incompatible, and Bob had his share of the latter. While he was still a young boy his father realized that the best way to "manage" him was through his mother and would often therefore tell her, "I wish you would get Bob to do this." He also had his share of "animal spirits." Once when he was on a visit home after his marriage, his younger brothers were romping in the house. Turning to his mother, he asked her how she had lived through the noise created by ten sons. With a smile, she answered, "Well, my son, you were the noisest of them all."

The noisy little boy, however, showed his devotion in a practical way. Every morning before leaving for school he would go to his mother with the inquiry, "Is there anything I can do for you?" This habit of offering assistance to the ladies of the household, thus acquired early in life, clung to him until the close; and he seldom left the house without asking his wife or daughters, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

When he was about nine years old he took his first journey. He thus describes it in a diary many years later: "My first trip, my biggest. To Barnwell village when nine years old; lost my hat and had to take the only one left at the hotel—after a big cry got a \$3.00 hat for a 75-cent one."

One of his most vivid early recollections was that of seeing his three young uncles mount their horses and ride down the avenue on their way to join the Confederate army. Allendale and the surrounding country did not feel the effects of the Civil War until almost the close of the struggle. In December, 1864, Sherman reached Savannah, on his famous "March to the Sea." A wide tract of land in Georgia lay in utter waste behind him. Already his men were calling to him as he rode past. "Uncle Billy, Grant is waiting for us in Richmond." It was evident that his northward route would lie through South Carolina, and the inhabitants

## 20 FLEEING FROM SHERMAN'S ARMY

of that state looked forward with dire forebodings to the devastation and desolation that would follow in his wake. Finally the inmates of the "Gravel Hill" home heard the booming of cannon on the Savannah River. Mr. Willingham realized that he must take his family to a place of safety; and, as he owned a plantation in southwest Georgia, he decided that he must seek refuge at that place. Other relatives who owned property in that part of the country went with him.

In mid-winter, the long caravan of carriages, buggies, covered wagons, cattle, mules and hogs set out. At night the travelers slept in the carriages, and in tents made by stretching carpet over poles; the negroes slept in the covered wagons. The boys of the various families walked a great part of the distance. At times bad roads and the crossing of creeks and rivers made traveling very slow; on one day they were able to make only eight miles progress. The weather was cold but delightful, and as the little group gathered around the bright camp fire, they almost forgot that they were fleeing from Sherman's army. On Sunday the march was discontinued and a day of rest enjoyed; on the last Sunday, however, as only a few miles remained between them and their destination, they spent a few hours traveling, finally reaching the plantation, which was located in Baker County, about ten miles from Albany, Georgia. Some of the older children were sent ahead; the overseer was at church; but, as he was expecting company of his own, he had a fine Sunday dinner, turkey being on the menu, much to the delight of the children.

The Willinghams were soon settled in their new home. At one time it was reported that the enemy were coming; Carrie and Bob carried some of the family silver out into the yard and buried it, rolling a log over the spot to conceal the hiding-place. The enemy, however, never came; and, in a few months' time Lee surrendered and the conflict was over.

The boys were very fond of hunting and often indulged in this sport while in southwest Georgia. One day a stray shot from Bob's gun peppered the face of one of the negroes who was hidden from view by some trees. The man ran out to protest; while talking matters over, he discovered a water moccasin at the little boy's feet, which he immediately killed, telling the lad that the Lord "sho'" did take care of him. He then proceeded to show him the beauties of the snake and to extract the fangs and teeth. The latter were wrapped in paper and put in Bob's pocket. On reaching home he showed them with a great deal of pride to his brothers. When his mother saw the treasures she was horrified and made him bury them in the yard, at the same time warning him never to play with poison. In after years he often used this incident in his sermons with effect.

After spending almost two years in southwest Georgia, the Willinghams returned to their old home in South Carolina, which was one of the few residences in its community spared by the Federal forces. One day after the return to "Gravel Hill" the three oldest boys, Tom, Calder, and Bob, hitched a horse to the spring wagon and were having a delightful time racing up and down the road. In some way the wagon was broken; and, in order to punish them, their father sent them into a field to burn sedge grass. The boys worked faithfully. Finally the wind became high and the fire got beyond their control; nearer and nearer the fence it rolled, the boys putting forth heroic efforts to put it out. In the midst of their desperate fighting their father came to their assistance. They greeted him joyously, "We are so glad to see you, Father!" "My boys," he replied, "I was watching you all the time; I knew when you needed me." Dr. Willingham often used this incident to illustrate the Heavenly Father's watchful care.

The early education of the older Willingham children was received at a little school built by Mr. Willingham on

his plantation. Later they attended the Alleendale Academy, riding the two and a half miles in a Jersey wagon. Bob never received a whipping while at school; he often said afterward that he wished that the teacher had whipped him on the very first day, as this would have saved him much apprehension. He studied hard and always took a high stand in his classes. One of the older boys thus describes him:

“He was the most manly of all the boys in the school and the best all-round boy I ever saw. He studied hard for a young boy and was always in the lead. I never heard him use any language that he would not use in the presence of his mother and sisters.”

When Robert was thirteen years of age the great change in his heart and life took place. For many years Rev. Joseph A. Lawton, a man of culture and consecration, had served Concord Church, inspiring love and devotion among his people. While on a pastoral visit to Mrs. Willingham soon after the birth of her son, Robert, he had prayed that the little boy might become a preacher of righteousness, and ever afterward had called him his “little Timothy.” In the summer of 1867 protracted meetings were held in the little country school-house, as this was more centrally located than the church; many hearts were touched by the earnest words of Mr. Lawton. While that old hymn, “Come, humble sinner,” was being sung, Bob tore himself from his mother’s side and made a profession of his faith. His brother, Calder, was also converted during this meeting. In talking together, the two boys learned that each, not knowing of the change that had taken place in the other’s heart, had been longing to tell of his own conversion. During this meeting their sister, Carrie, was also converted. On a beautiful Sabbath morning in August the three were led down into a little creek near Concord Church and, while a solemn

hush fell on those standing on the banks, were buried with Christ in baptism.

A Bible given to Robert by his mother was highly prized by him. Beneath his name on the flyleaf she had written the verse, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The remembrance of that verse and of his mother's loving words of admonition as she urged him to study God's Word often helped him in resisting the temptations which assailed him.

## CHAPTER III.

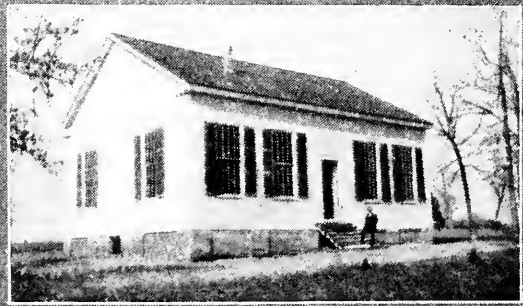
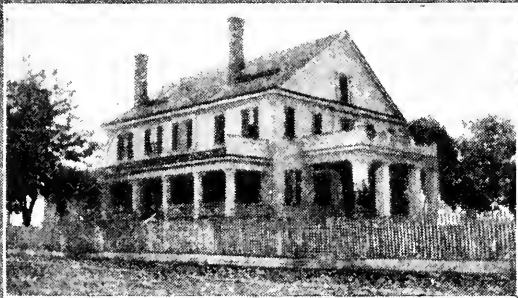
### STUDENT DAYS.

At the early age of fourteen Robert Willingham found himself ready to leave behind him the scenes of his boyhood days that he might prepare himself for the duties of manhood. Mr. Willingham was determined to give his children all the higher education they would receive, and allowed each child to choose the institution in which he wished to be educated. At one time five of the older children were in boarding-schools or colleges, each in a different institution.

After the ordeal of parting with loved ones was over, Bob was driven by his uncle, Mr. E. G. Willingham, to Johnson's Landing on the Savannah River, where he embarked for Augusta, Georgia, at which place he was to take the train to Athens. On the drive to the river the uncle proceeded to advise the lad about choosing his companions in college, and also to warn him about the many temptations to which he would be subjected. The kindly words made a deep impression on the boy; and in later years he often referred to them, speaking of how much they had helped not only in college but also in after life.

On arriving at his destination the fourteen-year-old boy was seized with that dread malady, homesickness. As he looked about his dormitory room his eyes rested on his unpacked trunk, and, realizing that this was the only tie between him and home, he sat down on it and indulged in a good cry.

There was at the university at this time a galaxy of students who in later years have been noted for their in-



R. J. WILLINGHAM AT SEVENTEEN, AND WHILE PASTOR AT MEMPHIS. GRAVEL HILL, S. C., BOYHOOD HOME AND OLD CONCORD CHURCH.





tellectual brilliancy, and have taken prominent places in the educational and political life of Georgia. Among these were: Gov. Nat. Harris; Ex-Governor W. M. Slaton, Judge Emory Speer, Judge Samuel B. Adams, Chancellor Walter Hill, Chancellor David Barrow, and Henry W. Grady. In speaking of his old classmate, Judge Samuel B. Adams, of Savannah, Georgia, writes the following:

"I was a classmate of the late Robert J. Willingham during our Freshman and Sophomore years. We joined the University of Georgia about the same time, the early part of September, 1868. He was very young, only fourteen years and a few months old. I was just completing my fifteenth year. He was probably, at his matriculation, the youngest student in the university. I knew him well and appreciated him highly. I am confident that I never knew a more popular or more highly respected student during my course of four years.

"The traits which distinguished him in after life marked him as a boy and a youth. He was studious and earnest, warm-hearted and genial, loving and lovable. He had the absolute trust and confidence of his fellow-students and professors. His habits were exemplary. While full of life and fun, I am sure that there was no conduct or language inconsistent with the highest and purest moral rectitude. I do not recall that he was regarded as pious in those days. But all the boys knew that he was uncompromisingly moral and pure."

The Phi Kappa and Demosthenian Societies are rival literary societies at the University of Georgia. Willingham joined the Demosthenian; and, throughout his college course, made a most enthusiastic member.

The first few months of school rolled by; and, as the Christmas season approached a happy boy looked forward to spending the holidays at home. The following description of the journey home, written many years later, is found in one of his scrap-books:

“One cold wintry night in December, 1868, a young boy of fourteen, I was going down Savannah River, going home from school. As the steamer would puff and blow, how I longed for home. Every now and then I would go to the captain and ask, ‘How long before we get there?’ ‘How far now, Captain?’ By and by night came on and with the darkness a slow, drizzly, cold rain. Again and again I looked forward, until the boat making a bend in the river, the captain called me and said, ‘See that light yonder? Well, your father is there; he told me he would meet you!’ And so he was; as we went up the hill to the old family mansion and met mother and brothers and sisters waiting with happy, joyful faces, I forgot the storm and darkness through which we had passed. The mother and sister who seemed so glad to meet me and welcome me that night have gone to the home above, but who knows but that when life’s voyage is over, and the craft touches the other shore, they will meet and welcome me ‘home’ into the Father’s presence above?”

Young Willingham was fond of athletics and often played football, which, however, was entirely different from the game of today. He was also fond of gymnasium work. One day while hanging from a trapeze he fell and broke his nose. His sisters and brothers have always enjoyed telling the story that when his mother heard of the accident she burst into tears, exclaiming, “Bobbie never had but one good feature, and now he has broken that!” While he was recovering from the effects of the fall he was visited by Dr. Mell, Chancellor of the University. Before leaving, the Chancellor asked the boy if there was anything that he could do for him. Young Willingham answered that he would appreciate it very much if he would look in the tray of his trunk, in the lefthand corner, and find a handkerchief. Dr. Mell did as requested, but could not refrain from expressing surprise at the orderly arrangement of his belongings.

After two successful years at the university, realizing that he was still very young and thinking that practical

experience in the business world might enable him to pursue his studies later more profitably, the young student decided to work a year before continuing his literary course. On reaching "Gravel Hill" he found his father preparing to remove his family to Macon, Georgia, as South Carolina was suffering intensely from the effects of the war and the evils of the Reconstruction days. Bob was left behind in charge of the plantation until the crops could be gathered. It was a responsible position for a boy of sixteen to be in charge of many negroes, so recently set free; the youth, however, measured up to the responsibility and found himself remarkably successful in managing those under his authority.

After the crops had been gathered Bob joined the rest of the family in Macon. He accepted a position as assistant bookkeeper in his father's cotton warehouse, receiving a salary of seventy-five dollars a month. Quickly the months rolled by. As the time for him to resume his college course drew near, the head bookkeeper, who was well pleased with his work, tried to prevail upon him to continue in the office by offering to raise his salary. The seventeen-year-old boy declined, saying, "There isn't money enough in Macon to keep me from getting an education."

The last two years of his college course were spent in the home of Professor William Rutherford, an excellent teacher and a man of deep piety. Dr. Rutherford was very much impressed with the fact that young Willingham always attended family prayers. After retiring to their rooms at night some of the students would sometimes climb out of the windows and go off on larks, but the professor always knew that he could trust Willingham. During his whole college course the young man attended church regularly; he also made it an ironclad rule never to study on Sunday.

Young Mr. Willingham was very fond of the society of young ladies, and had a number of good friends among them while at the university. "Girls" and "books," neverthe-

less, did not go well together as far as he was concerned; and, as he was determined to graduate with honor, he found that he could not devote much time to the fair sex. A few months before graduating he wrote in a letter to his sister, "Never visit the girls and thus am not disturbed mentally." He was urged to join a fraternity but declined, giving as his reason that he did not want to belong to anything *secret*. Throughout his life he hated secrets; and it was extremely difficult for him to keep one.

Of all his studies, mathematics was his favorite. From childhood he had excelled in this science. His fellow students claimed that he could see right through a problem. If a difficult one presented itself, he cared not how late into the night he sat up solving it.

During his senior year the young man experienced the first great sorrow of his life in the death of his sister, Matchie, and his little brother, George, both of whom died of meningitis, an epidemic of which was raging in Macon. He was especially devoted to Matchie, who was next to him in age, and the memory of the lovely girl was cherished throughout his life.

Although he carried an unusually heavy course of nine studies in his senior year, he graduated with high honors, receiving the Master's degree. He also won the mathematics medal in a contest open to the entire university. He was elected one of the four debaters of his society in the annual champion debate, one of the great events of the finals. Sidney Herbert, who was present at the closing commencement exercises, thus described this occasion many years later in an article in the *Savannah Morning News*:

"Years ago I used to be a regular attendant upon the commencement exercises of the University of Georgia, and well do I remember the grand 'feast of reason' we had there in 1873, when Hon. A. H. Stephens and Bishop George F. Pierce delivered the addresses and Rev. Dr. J. Dixon, then

of Augusta, preached the Y. M. C. A. sermon, and R. J. Willingham, of Macon, graduated.

“There were several talented young men in the class, but not one that presented so many noble and sterling qualities as Willingham, whose oration was entitled ‘Opposition to New Ideas.’ When he came forward to receive the gold medal for mathematics, the degree of Master of Arts, and ‘proficient’ in nearly a dozen studies, he was greeted with hearty and prolonged applause. I was seated on the platform between a very illustrious Georgia soldier and a distinguished Georgia statesman and jurist, and back of me was the father of young Willingham. When the general and the judge turned to him and congratulated him on his son’s splendid success, the sensible father simply replied, ‘But better than all this, he is a sincere Christian young man.’”

## CHAPTER IV.

### TEACHING AND MARRIAGE.

In January, 1874, R. J. Willingham accepted a position as assistant in the Macon High School. The public school system in Macon at that time was in a state of incipency and the new position was not without its difficulties. The former teacher had been a stern man who believed in the free use of the rod. Several of the boys carried pistols; many of the pupils were older than the new teacher, and, supposing that he would attempt to rule by force, intended to show the young man a hard time. The task of discipline, therefore, was not an easy one; but the pupils soon found that in the youth was a man who knew how, by his personality rather than by force, to command both respect and obedience.

In the class was a boy who was bad, but remarkably bright. After repeated misconduct on his part, he was asked by the professor to remain after school. Instead of censuring the boy, Professor Willingham talked kindly and earnestly, impressing upon him the fact that the making of a man was in him if only he would turn over a new leaf and make use of his opportunities. There was a marked change in the conduct of the boy; and years later, as a successful business man, he told Dr. Willingham that this conversation was the turning point in his life.

In the fall Professor Willingham became principal of the Macon High School. This position included not only the supervision of the entire school, but also the teaching of one of the classes. As mathematics had been his favorite study while a student, he naturally supposed that he would

enjoy teaching this science more than any other subject; but he found that his most successful work was in Greek and Latin. He was said to be a "born Latin teacher." How he drilled those boys! They declined backward, forward, and "from the middle to the beginning."

It was during this period that Robert Willingham entered upon the holiest and most sacred relationship of life. The romance which led up to this began during his college days. One August day in 1872 three girls called on their friend, Matchie Willingham. Several times during the visit the young hostess spoke of her brother, Bob, who was at home on vacation, finally going out and inviting him to come in and meet her friends. The young man gladly accepted the invitation, and proceeded to make himself as charming as possible to the young ladies. On hearing that one of them was a musician, he insisted that she play for him, begging for "Mocking Bird with Variations." When the visit was over the girls went off down the street, talking about the boy with a "large mouth," and having a great deal of fun over his having asked so fine a musician to play variations. One of these girls was Corneille Bacon.

When a boy, "refugeeing" in southwest Georgia, Bob Willingham had heard his father speak of Major Robert J. Bacon, a cotton planter, who owned a large plantation across the Flint River. Major Bacon was a prominent figure in his community. He was a native of Liberty County, a grandson of Dr. Henry Holcombe, the founder of the First Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia—the church of which Dr. George Mosse was the first senior deacon. When a young man Mr. Bacon graduated from the University of Georgia, and for several years practiced law in La Grange, Georgia; on account of ill health he gave up this profession and became a planter in Mitchell County, later living for several years in Albany, Georgia. The town of Baconton was named for him. For a number of years he served in the Georgia

Legislature. Mr. Bacon was a gentleman of the old school, a man of courtly manners and a gifted conversationalist. He was warm-hearted and genial, and for many years dispensed a generous hospitality. Of exalted Christian character, he exerted a wide influence for good over young and old. His wife, Mary Isabella Walton, a woman of beauty and culture, and of pure and noble character, having died at an early age, Major Bacon, with his tender and sympathetic nature, made every effort to take the place of father and mother in the lives of his children.

Mr. Willingham also told his sons of Major Bacon's little daughters, Corneille, Ella, Belle, and Laura, whom he had seen while on a trip across the river. When the eldest of these daughters and Robert Willingham met for the first time on that August day there was no thought of love at first sight; in fact, they often declared afterward that they were not at all attracted to each other.

A year passed by and Robert Willingham again met Corneille Bacon—this time at a morning church wedding. On this occasion each felt a stronger interest in the other than on the first occasion. As time went by interest developed into friendship. About this time each of them was asked to teach a class of boys in a mission Sunday school in South Macon, which was conducted every Sunday afternoon by teachers from the Sunday school of the First Baptist Church. As a teacher's meeting in connection with the little mission was held one night each week, the two young people often found themselves in each other's company. Bob Willingham, however, was not the person to wait for opportunities to see the girl in whom he was now so deeply interested; but, as in the other undertakings of his life, proceeded to make them. In talking of these days in later years, he often spoke of them as the time when he called to see his sweetheart "eight nights out of the week."



Friendship rapidly developed into love, and on the evening of his twentieth birthday the young man asked the girl of his choice to become his wife. Twenty years later, in writing of the disclosure of the "open secret," he could say:

"I have been thankful for it ever since; and with all my shortcomings look back with profound respect to my good judgment of early youth. Or, rather, I ought to thank the good Lord that he heard my prayer then, as so often since, and guided me aright. Surely he has been good to me."

The marriage took place on September 8, in the home of the bride's cousin, Hon. A. O. Bacon, of Macon, Georgia, Dr. E. W. Warren officiating. Truly the young man had made a wise choice in selecting his life companion, a girl who, having lost her mother at the early age of twelve years, had made it the highest aim of her life to be an ideal daughter to her widowed father, and both mother and sister to her motherless sisters and brother; a girl to whom the following was written on the eve of her marriage: "If the relation of wife is as perfectly filled by you as that of daughter and sister has always been, then yours will be a perfect life." This girl became the wife who put her husband's happiness first in her life, and by her self-sacrificing loyalty aided him in advancing the great work to which he devoted his life. After thirty-five years the appreciative husband could write:

"You have been an untold blessing to me and I thank the Lord for you."

## CHAPTER V.

### PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

In June, 1877, Robert Willingham resigned his position as principal of the Macon High School. In the three and a half years devoted to teaching he had been eminently successful; but for some time he had realized that this profession was not to be his life work.

What was to be his life work? This question constantly forced itself upon the young man, but he found himself unable to give an answer that was satisfactory to himself. Was he called to preach? When a baby he had been dubbed "Parson" by his uncle, E. G. Willingham, who was present on the occasion when Rev. Joseph A. Lawton had prayed that he might become a preacher; and, by certain members of the family, he was always called by this name. As a boy he had been a favorite of Pastor Lawton, who spoke of him as his "little Timothy." His family had always seemed to take it for granted that he would become a preacher. Was God calling him to preach the gospel—or were his family and friends? For years he had been unable to solve this problem. When addressing the girl who became his wife, he had told her that he might some day become a preacher, asking her, if she had any objections, to make them then. Years had gone by and he had spoken little on this subject, for he had determined never to enter the ministry unless he was sure that God was calling him unmistakably. In the meantime he had been actively engaged in religious work as treasurer of the First Baptist Church and as teacher of a class of girls in the Sunday school.

In this state of unrest, the young man decided to give up teaching and the insurance work in which he had been en-

gaged after school hours and to enter his father's warehouse as cotton solicitor until he could complete a course in law which he was pursuing at night. Several months passed by; he was ready to enter the legal profession, when a call came to him direct from God. One day an old deacon, with white hair and bowed form, Dr. M. A. Walker, came into the street car in which he was sitting. "My young brother," he said after a few moments, "has it ever occurred to you that God wants you in some other business than that in which you are now engaged?" The young man replied, "Why do you ask such a question?" "Because I have an idea that God wants you to preach." "Who has been talking to you about this?" he asked. "No one, I have simply been impressed this way and thought I would mention it to you." Soon afterward the young man who was deeply impressed by the old man's words, told his father that he believed he would be compelled to preach. With tears running down his cheeks, the strong man exclaimed, "Why, my boy, the evening you were born I prayed for that. I went aside into the little shed room of our home and prayed God if it was His will to make you a preacher of the gospel, but my faith had grown very weak." From that day the young man never doubted his call.

When he became convinced that he was called to preach he wished to enter the ministry immediately. His family now consisted of a wife and two children. From a financial standpoint, a theological course seemed impracticable, and he felt that his university training must suffice. His pastor, Dr. Thomas E. Skinner, realizing the necessity of special theological training, determined that, if possible, the young man must attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Meeting young Mrs. Willingham on the street one afternoon, he impressed upon her the urgency of the case; and the young woman, who, when her sweetheart had told her that some day he might preach, had determined accord-

ing to her father's advice never to "lay a straw in his way," now determined to make every sacrifice necessary and to induce him to attend the seminary.

On December 19, 1879, he was licensed to preach by the First Baptist Church of Macon, Georgia; in ten days he was on the train bound for Louisville, Kentucky. In these ten days much had been accomplished. The "Little Cottage on the Ravine," the attractive home on Orange Street built for his bride—the home in which so many happy days had been spent—had been closed; all preparations for the six months had been made; and his wife and two little ones had been put on the train for Albany, Georgia, where they were to spend several months with Major Bacon.

The following article appeared in one of the daily papers soon after his departure:

"R. J. Willingham, Esq., who graduated with so much *eclat* several years since at the University of Georgia, taking every degree, and who is well known as a popular teacher in Macon, has decided to enter the ministry, and left last week for the Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky.

"We doubt not that this gifted young gentleman will be equally as distinguished in theology as he was in letters, and will prove a useful and most efficient exponent and herald of the blessed religion of the Redeemer.

"The country needs an educated ministry, and we rejoice when our talented young men feel called, and are willing to cast in their lot with the servants of God and devote their lives to the furtherance of the Master's kingdom."

On January 1 he arrived at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, thus entering at the beginning of the second term of the first year that this institution was located in Louisville, Kentucky. Soon after his arrival he called on Dr. Broadus, who kindly assisted him in arranging his course. At this time he expected to attend the seminary

only during the remainder of the term. Several days after reaching Louisville he writes:

"I have been from home a week this morning, and I thank God that He has so much blessed me in thus starting on His work. It encourages me to go on and tends to make me feel that surely I have been called to do his service."

Before leaving Macon, Mr. Willingham had been told by his pastor, Dr. Skinner, that he would find at the seminary the "most desperately in earnest set of men" he had ever seen; and he found that this was true. Never before or since did he see the same proportion of men out of a given number in any undertaking so thoroughly consecrated to their work. He had many warm friends among the students, among whom were H. Allen Tupper, Henry W. Battle, C. W. Pruitt, and W. R. L. Smith.

Separation from his family was indeed a hardship for which even hard work and the companionship of his fellow students could not compensate. Correspondence was one of his chief pleasures. His mother writes:

"You don't know how much I appreciate your writing to me so soon after you arrived in Louisville. I thought perhaps as you have a wife to correspond with now, you would not be so prompt in writing to me; but I find that your new ties have not caused you to forget the old, and that you are the same affectionate son that you have ever been."

Young Willingham was impressed with the idea that "the way to learn to preach is to preach." He had not been at the Seminary three days before he started on his first sermon. On January 27 he preached for the first time. In writing of this occasion many years later, he said that he had been wishing for an opportunity to preach and when it came he did not know what to say or do. The story of his first sermon can be traced in extracts from his letters:

"Jan. 23. I expect to preach next Sunday night in one of the smaller churches here. Pray that I may do my duty."

“Jan. 28. I preached or tried to last night. No one knows the care and anxiety I went through. God grant that I may do better next time. There was no one there that I knew except those I met there. Some of the students wanted to go, but I discouraged them. It is about two miles from here to the church.”

“Jan. 29. After going through Sunday, I unintentionally opened at the 42d and 43d Psalms, and think I appreciate their feeling if ever I did.”

“Feb. 4. I heard yesterday that the people liked my sermon, and some of them did not want to believe that it was my first effort. So I could not have made a complete failure.”

Several extracts from letters to his wife picture him at this time:

“I heard from Father and brother Calder both yesterday. They are very kind in writing; I tell you it helps to keep up one’s spirits even to get a letter. I think I get more mail than anyone here, and that is one reason the young brethren come in here to enjoy a pleasant chat. Several have expressed thanks for being able to take a good laugh. They don’t know that home folks keep me in such a good humor.”

“I have been trying lately to stop telling so many jokes, getting off funny things, etc. I was actually getting some reputation in that line which I don’t care to have. I enjoy laughing, teasing, etc., but when it comes that my sayings are to entertain the crowds and gather fellows in my room to listen, the thing has another face.”

“How about Bob? I hope the little fellow is better. Often does my heart fall when I see other little fellows about his size, and I hardly ever pass without telling whoever I am with, ‘That little fellow is about the size of my little boy, not so stout or not so large,’ or some such.”

“And the little girl, how is she? Can she talk any yet? Are the No. 7 and 8 teeth out yet?”

“It almost gives me the ‘blues’ to look in some cozy parlors sometimes and see the happy home circle. But then I can remember May—most happy day.”

"I heard Dr. Broadus preach last night one of the gentlest, sweetest, purest, most tender sermons it has ever been my pleasure to listen to. When he prays it is like man, a child, talking with his Father, God. I wish you could hear him."

"We had our missionary meeting this morning. Had a good, interesting time. Brother E. Z. Simmons, who has been a missionary to China, gave us a long talk on the manners, customs, religion, etc., of the Chinese. It was really instructive. Dr. Tupper will be here next Sunday, and I hope will meet with general success."

"I am head and ears in my studies now, and can begin to see something done. Feel that, if I could take the full course, I would at least not be the most insignificant preacher in the land, and maybe a big preacher; but as I have not much aspiration in that direction, don't know but that it's as well. I want to be useful, *preeminently* successful in winning and strengthening souls for Christ. . . . Now, to say that we don't like a little praise is just what is not true. But let us pray that the excess of this may not be our bane. I fear the evil. It is one I will have to watch; and one I pray against. Oh, that I may preach for God's glory and not my own!"

Realizing more and more, as the days passed by, the necessity of obtaining as extended a theological course as possible, he determined to make every effort to return to the Seminary for the first term of the following year; his wife refused to be separated from him again, and it was decided that his family should accompany him.

Before returning home, he attended the Southern Baptist Convention, which met in Nashville. This was the first time that he had attended the sessions of this body. As he sat in the great Convention, little did the young man dream of the many times he would in later years appear before this body of Southern Baptists as their representative in the great cause of bringing a lost world to Christ.

On June 2 he was ordained to the ministry, the service taking place in the First Church, Macon. Dr. T. E. Skinner

made the charge. On the same occasion his brother, Calder, was ordained as a deacon.

The first few weeks of vacation were spent at his father's home, where his little family had been staying during the last six weeks of his absence; the latter part, on his brother Osgood's plantation in Monroe County, his time being devoted to preaching in the country churches, holding protracted meetings and attending associations.

Midnight of August 29 found the young man with his wife and little ones riding through the streets of Louisville in search of a hotel. The terrible scourge of yellow fever during the summer of '78 drove thousands from the stricken cities of New Orleans and Memphis. Several places had established a strict quarantine. Although Louisville opened her gates, many people feared the dread disease—among them boarding-house keepers. This was forcibly impressed upon Mr. Willingham's mind next morning as he tried to find a suitable boarding-house for his loved ones. At each place the first question asked was, "Where are you from?" When the answer, "From Georgia," was given, he was told that the place was full. Anyone hailing from the South must surely be from New Orleans or Memphis!

After much difficulty, arrangements were finally made and boarding-house life in a large city with wife and little ones commenced. His studies were not neglected, yet time was found for a walk before the sun went down, or after the bright lights made the shop windows attractive; holidays were rare, but an occasional outing—a little trip up the river, or the launching of a new steamboat on the Ohio—broke the monotony of work and boarding-house life. They made Walnut Street Church, which was not far away, their "church home," though they sometimes attended Broadway and McFerran. The kindly visits of the professors and their families were like oases in a desert to the young wife separated for the first time from friends and loved ones. Sick-



ness came to the little brown-eyed girl, and twice in those few months she was near the "borderland." There were times of anxiety and uncertainty; but with a strong faith and cheerful bearing, the young man was able to keep up his studies and pass his examinations successfully.

In December he received a call to the church in Talbotton, Georgia. Christmas found the young husband and wife once more among their loved ones in Macon, thankful for privileges of preparation, but glad at the prospect of settling down to their life work.

Had he been able to take the entire theological course offered by the Seminary, the struggle of his early ministry would perhaps not have been so great, and success would probably have earlier crowned his efforts. Who can doubt, however, that, during these years of faithful but unrenowned effort, he was in a school of preparation, and that from the experiences and hardships encountered he gained an insight into human nature and a sympathy with those who were struggling which enabled him, throughout his life, to reach the hearts and lives of his fellowmen? In 1894, he wrote to one of the professors of the Seminary:

"It is fifteen years since I left the dear old institution. Great changes have come, of which I little dreamed then. But in all of these changes I more and more deeply appreciate the blessed influences of that grand institution. May the Holy Spirit rest in power upon each one of you professors. No men on earth occupy a more important position."

## CHAPTER VI.

### EARLY PASTORATES.

In January, 1879, R. J. Willingham moved to Talbotton, Georgia, to enter upon his first duties as a pastor. Talbotton was a quiet little town located seven miles from the railroad. The Methodists greatly outnumbered the Baptists, and the little church was weak numerically and financially. Mr. Willingham also became pastor of Valley Grove, a country church ten miles from Talbotton, and of the church in Geneva, which had just been organized and was being aided by the State Mission Board.

The young pastor started upon his pastoral work with only thirteen sermons. Many of these were most effectively used by him throughout his life; nevertheless, during these early years preaching for him was very difficult. With only one year's theological training, sermonizing was not easy; pastoral duties, visiting the sick in town and country and building up the churches, consumed a great deal of time and left none too much for study and preparation. For years, he felt a timidity and lack of confidence in his own ability as a preacher; and, keenly feeling his own unworthiness and burdened with the responsibility of lost souls, he suffered from nervousness and depression before entering the pulpit. The earnestness and seriousness with which he regarded his work can be seen in some lines written by him on the first page of a pocket notebook:

"'Tis night of May 14, 1879, and with this day ends another year of my life. What has been done in the past?

"I have heard it said that what a man is at twenty-five he is all of his life. God grant that I may be a truthful, upright, honest Christian gentleman tomorrow; that His

grace may richly abound in me; and that, strengthened by His Spirit, I may preach the gospel in its purity, excellency and power, and by my life show forth the love, mercy and peace of true godliness."

Financially, life was a struggle to the young preacher. The three churches were small, and the combined salaries were not equal to half the amount which he had been able to lay up in bank during the first year of his married life. More than a month after his arrival, as no salary had been paid, he approached a deacon of one of the churches and explained that as moving had been expensive, a payment would help him a great deal. The deacon kindly promised to look into the matter; meeting him later, the older man informed him that he had been able to collect some money for him, and drawing out his pocketbook handed him a quarter of a dollar!

Much of his salary was paid in provisions furnished by different members. In a package of old letters, received by him during this period, was found an envelope containing slips of paper on which were written in various hand-writings such inscriptions as the following:

"J. J. M.—One bushel potatoes."

"J. A. K.—Feb. 27, One load of wood and one-half bushel of potatoes, \$1.50."

Money, previously laid aside for a "rainy day," added to the salary, made life comfortable for the little family; and the many pleasures connected with the life of his well-beloved people made up for the lack of ready money.

Years later, Dr. Willingham wrote of this period in a letter to his missionary son, Calder:

"Just to think you are twenty-five years old, and I so well remember when you were born. I had just given up a fine salary and gone into the ministry. That year with three children I got \$450 and had to pay \$100 rent and keep a horse and buggy to go to my churches. Surely it

was a struggle, but I was raising a missionary. How blessedly faithful your dear mother has been to me all these years! She is a wonderful woman."

At the end of eighteen months' labor in his three churches, Mr. Willingham had baptized one person—and she professed to have been converted under the ministry of another. To the young man, suffering from timidity and from a feeling of his own unworthiness, the lack of results was very discouraging. It seemed that God was not blessing his efforts—after all, was he where God wanted him to be? The answer to this question was thus vividly impressed upon him: Late one night he was aroused from sleep by some one knocking at his front door. His uncle, W. J. Willingham, a trustee of Monroe Female College, had driven a distance of sixty miles or more to offer him the presidency of that institution. The salary offered was about three times as large as he was then receiving. The young man declined the position, since with the offer had come the conviction that he could not leave the ministry.

The following extract from a notebook tells further of the results of his ministry:

"About twenty-eight months and only three baptized. Then thirty-four baptized in a few months."

Several times during these early years he was appointed by the Governor of Georgia as a member of the Board of Visitors to attend the examinations of the senior class at the University of Georgia and also the annual examination of the students at the Atlanta University.

After two years, Mr. Willingham resigned the charge in Geneva and became pastor of the church in Thomaston, a town twenty miles from Talbotton. Every other Saturday the young man left his little family and drove over to keep his appointment on the following day. The Saturday before he took charge of this church was a bitterly cold day. Al-

though a blinding snowstorm was in progress (a rare occurrence in south Georgia), he bravely set out on horseback. Mile after mile he traveled. As he rode farther and farther, the cold became more intense. Night came on. As the horse plowed through the snow, the young man, now chilled to the bone, realized that he could not make the town; and, reining up before a house which stood near the roadside, he asked the privilege of spending the night there. The farmer refused, saying that his wife was sick. "My friend," replied the young man, "I'll have to stay. I am almost frozen." Realizing the truth of his statement, the farmer allowed him to come in, and proceeded to make him comfortable. Never before had a big hickory fire seemed so beautiful to the young man, or fried meat and hot biscuit so delicious. On arriving at the church next morning, he found a congregation of three—the sexton, the senior deacon, and one other. As he walked into the church, the deacon exclaimed: "Well, you'll do!"

Mr. Willingham was devoted to his people, and many friendships were formed at this time which were never forgotten. He was "all things to all men." He could talk cotton and corn, peas and potatoes to the farmers; he could see the good points in cows and horses, and could watch with interest the blacksmith at his anvil or the carpenter at his bench; nor was he less companionable with the doctors, lawyers, and preachers who were numbered among his flock. His house was always open to his friends, and, especially on preaching days in Talbotton, there was usually company at the parsonage. He took an active interest in the young people of his churches; and, through his influence, several of them entered Mercer University and Shorter College.

While in the pastorate, Mr. Willingham devoted his best efforts to advancing the causes of temperance, evangelism, and missions. Frequent revivals were held in the various

churches of which he was pastor at this time. Perhaps the most effective meeting conducted by him was that in which he assisted Dr. E. W. Warren, pastor of the First Church of Macon.

In after years he would sometimes tell of one of the members of the Valley Grove Church, "Uncle" Hardy Bryan, or, as he would call him, "The Hard Shell with a Soft Heart." Uncle Hardy was known to be opposed to missions. Some called him a "hardshell." He was a devoted friend to his young pastor. As they would drive together to the Saturday meetings, they would talk of many things. The old man would tell of the old corn-shucking times and would sing the old songs as they were sung by the boys and girls while they worked. After a while the young pastor would begin to speak of missions; as he talked of Dr. Taylor and Dr. Yates, a tear would glisten in the old man's eye, and he would say, "Look here, my pastor, I don't believe in those things they call missions, but that thing you are talking about I believe in. It must be good to see those poor people turning to our Savior, and I want to have a part in it. Would you mind sending on some money for me?" And the young pastor would take the five-dollar bill, realizing that, although the man had been trained with prejudices and had not been informed in regard to the greatest work in the world, nevertheless he loved the Lord and loved souls.

On one occasion Mr. Willingham was appointed to preach the missionary sermon at an association held in the country. Standing under the arbor and facing the crowds gathered in the open, he forgot his timidity as he lost himself in the great theme of bringing a lost world to the Savior. He preached as he had never preached before. Rev. A. B. Campbell, of Columbus, Georgia, a man who exerted a great influence over the young preacher, was present on the occasion; as they drove from the association that afternoon, he complimented him upon his success, and roundly scolded

him for not always preaching with so much fervor. This sermon proved a turning point in the young preacher's life—he had discovered that he could touch the hearts of his hearers, and from this time on he preached with much more power.

In October, 1881, he received a call to the Sardis Baptist Church in Barnesville, Georgia. Efforts had been made by other churches to secure him as pastor but he had discouraged a call. When the call was received from Barnesville, however, he felt that Providence was directing him thither, and accepted. His early pastorates were left with the conviction that, although his ministry had been inconspicuous, he had labored faithfully, and his efforts had been blessed.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BARNESVILLE AND CHATTANOOGA.

A hearty welcome awaited the new pastor in Barnesville, Georgia, and he and his family were soon comfortably settled in the little parsonage. Barnesville was a progressive town on the railroad between Macon and Atlanta, and Sardis Baptist Church was larger and more active than any of which Mr. Willingham had previously had charge. Services were held on the first, second and fourth Sundays of every month; on the third Sunday he preached for the church at Milner, a town five miles from Barnesville. Prayer-meeting services were conducted by him every week in both churches.

During the six years spent in working in these two fields, not only did the young pastor see his efforts blessed and his churches built up numerically and spiritually, but he himself developed in many ways. Although he devoted much time to pastoral work, served as trustee of Gordon Institute, and engaged actively in work for betterment of the community, he found time for study and preparation. He did not conquer the feeling of timidity and lack of confidence in his ability as a preacher until years later while pastor in Tennessee; nevertheless, in Barnesville he began to realize a power in preaching—a power which steadily grew as the years passed by.

His work was not without its obstacles. The Methodist denomination predominated in Barnesville; their church, situated in the residential section of the town, drew large crowds. Sardis Baptist Church was a frame building located in a grove on the edge of town; on account of the distance from their homes, many of the members did not attend, and the congregations were small. The new pastor faith-



fully set to work to build up his church; his efforts were not in vain; and, in a short time, more than a hundred were added to the membership.

The pastor realized that the future of the church demanded a more central location. Old Sardis had many hallowed associations. There were some members whose ancestors for generations had worshiped in that building; their loved ones were sleeping in the graveyard adjoining. Some were descendants of a former pastor and for years had tied their horses under the same trees which he had used in the long ago. The thought of leaving the old building was to many like the snapping of heart-strings. The young pastor, realizing the difficulty of his undertaking, used no undue haste. Time and tactful effort succeeded in persuading all of the wisdom of a change; and, when the vote was taken, there was not a dissenting vote.

A suitable site was procured, and work on the new church begun. The pastor was deeply interested in the erection of the building and each day watched with interest the progress of the work. The dedication of this church marked a new era in the history of the Baptist denomination in Barnesville. Fresh enthusiasm was infused into the members, and the congregations and membership steadily increased. As the years have gone by, the prosperity of the church has continued; and, today, the Baptists are the leading denomination in the town. Several months after the dedication of the new building, the pastor received a call to the church in Americus, Georgia, which he declined to accept, feeling that duty compelled him to stay in Barnesville until the church which he had built had been paid for.

Other gracious revivals were held in the Barnesville and Milner churches. He was often asked to assist other pastors in holding protracted meetings. A meeting in which he assisted Dr. J. E. L. Holmes, of the First Baptist Church of Savannah, was so richly blessed that he was constrained

to return the following year. The "Willingham Band" was organized by the boys of the church.

Mr. Willingham took an active part in the prohibition fight, as a result of which liquor was driven out of Barnesville and Pike County. The wet element was strong, and the fight was long and bitter. When asked why he opposed the liquor forces so strenuously, Mr. Willingham pointed to his three little sons, the youngest of whom was proudly wearing his first pair of trousers. "There are three good reasons," he answered.

During these early years Mr. Willingham took an active interest in the work of the denomination. As Georgia correspondent, he wrote for "The Examiner." He frequently attended the meetings of the various associations and often took part on the programs. Upon the organization of the Centennial Association in 1883, he was made moderator. Though he attended the state conventions, he did not take a prominent part, as his reserve kept him in the background. From these, however, and from the Southern Baptist Convention, which he was sometimes able to attend, he derived inspiration and missionary zeal which added to the power of his ministry.

Dr. E. C. Dargan, who in 1911-13 was President of the Southern Baptist Convention, writes:

"Our intimacy dates from the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta, in 1885. We occupied the same room in the hospitable home of Mr. Doolittle. As we were very near the same age, and our views of life and thought were very congenial, we thoroughly enjoyed one another for the few days of our association. We were both young, and had not been many years in the ministry. We were beginning to feel the problems and burdens both of the pastoral and of the general denominational life. We discussed the men and measures of the Convention, not dreaming that upon ourselves in later years would devolve so much of the labor and burden as came to us. He was full of enthusiasm and hopefulness. I was impressed by

his piety, his geniality, his good sense. All through the years that followed in our acquaintance and frequent intercourse these impressions remained."

In the summer of 1887, as he was preparing to leave for Houston for the purpose of looking over the field of the First Baptist Church of that city, to which he had been called, he was summoned to his mother's bedside. He found her very ill. As he watched beside her bedside during the early morning hours of July 17, her soul passed into eternity. As he bent over her, dying, she put her arm around his neck and murmured, "You have always been such a blessing to me!" Keenly did the devoted son feel the loss of his saintly mother. With a breaking heart, he wrote, "What I am or hope to be I owe more to her than to any other earthly being."

While considering the call to Houston, he received a unanimous call to the First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, which, after prayerful consideration, and a visit to the field, he decided to accept.

His work during the six years spent in Barnesville had been graciously blessed, and between pastor and people a warm affection had sprung up. A large crowd thronged the church at the farewell service. Many tears flowed as church members and friends pressed down the aisles during the singing of hymns after the sermon to grasp the hand of the departing pastor. With regret he took leave of the people he loved so well, and of the State in which he had spent his youth and in which he had first labored in the Master's vineyard, to take up the greater work which lay before him.

Chattanooga was the most important city in East Tennessee and was considered by many the strategic point of the South. After the war it had become a manufacturing center and had grown rapidly. Previous to Mr. Willingham's arrival, a real estate boom had taken place; and people were pouring in from all sections of the country, espe-

cially from the West and the North. The inhabitants were enterprising; and the majority of them young.

During the year preceding the call extended to Mr. Willingham there had been serious trouble in the First Church. Many members had withdrawn and organized the Central Church. Before accepting the call, Mr. Willingham insisted that certain resolutions be passed, declaring that he could then "stand for the church before the association, convention or what not, firm and solid," and that, with divine guidance, he hoped to lead them safely through all difficulties. Hard work, tact, and grace enabled the new pastor to fulfill his promise; harmony was soon restored, and the church recognized as a mighty force for good in Chattanooga.

As the church building had recently been sold, services were held in a frame tabernacle until a new building could be erected. With characteristic energy and enthusiasm, the pastor threw himself into the work of building a house of worship. A large stone edifice of Romanesque architecture was planned.

On the pastor's thirty-fifth birthday the lecture room of the church having been completed, the formal opening of the building took place. This was a day long remembered by the church. The Southern Baptist Convention had just held its session in Memphis; and many of the delegates, as they were returning home, stopped in Chattanooga for the occasion. Dr. F. M. Ellis, of Baltimore, delivered a strong sermon on the text, "This people have I formed for myself." The dedication service was held in November.

Large congregations and a growing membership attested the popularity of the pastor. Realizing the opportunity offered by the steady increase in the population of Chattanooga, he spared neither time nor effort in seeking to bring newcomers of the denomination into his church. Many also were converted under his ministry. During the four years of his pastorate the membership was more than doubled.

Mission Sunday schools and churches were also maintained by the First Church in other portions of the city and its suburbs. He received many invitations to conduct protracted meetings, several of which he was able to accept. In his own church gracious meetings were held at various times.

Mr. Willingham's heart warmed to the many young men in the bustling city, scores of whom, separated for the first time from home and loved ones, were without ties to bind them to higher things. He visited them at their places of business and put them to work in the church and Sunday school. Special meetings were conducted for them, and many of them developed into strong Christians. His home was always open to them, and often on Sunday his table was stretched to its utmost limit to entertain them. The young women also felt that they had the pastor's sympathy and co-operation.

He was much impressed with the good that Carson and Newman College was accomplishing in training the young men and women of East Tennessee. He was always ready to contribute liberally to this college, also to use tongue and pen that others might become interested and assist in its development. In 1899 the degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by this institution.

While in Chattanooga, he began to be recognized as one of the strong men of the denomination. During the first year of his pastorate he assisted in editing the *Baptist and Reflector*. He took an active part in the work of the Ocoee Association, the district association to which the Baptist churches of Chattanooga belonged and of which he was at one time moderator. He was greatly interested in the fifth Sunday meetings of the association and often appeared on the program to deliver missionary addresses. In the Tennessee State Convention he also manifested a great interest in mission and often spoke to the foreign mission

report. In the fall of 1890 this convention was entertained by his church.

The following year he was elected Vice-President of the Foreign Mission Board for Tennessee. The new appointment meant added duties, but gladly and heartily did he throw himself into the work of stirring up the people in behalf of missions. Tracts and letters were sent out; appeals were made through religious papers; and many were induced to subscribe to the *Foreign Mission Journal*. The following is an extract from a letter received by him from O. L. Hailey, Vice-President of the Home Mission Board of Tennessee:

“This is going to be a good time to make an impression for Foreign Missions. And besides it is going to be a time to make a ten-strike for the Baptists, and you must come. No two ways about it. It is your duty to come. You belong to the denomination, and not to Ocoee Association, nor to Chattanooga.”

1890 found the Baptists of America making preparations to celebrate the centennial of the beginning of Modern Missions. One hundred new missionaries were to be sent out by Southern Baptists during the year 1892, and a fund of \$250,000 for Home and Foreign Missions was to be secured. A Centennial Committee was appointed in each state. Dr. Willingham was appointed on the Tennessee Centennial Committee.

Two months before his appointment on this committee he had left for a trip abroad. Traveling in the Holy Land was at that time quite popular. Generous checks had been sent by his brother, Calder, and his father, both of whom were very anxious for him to make this trip. A furlough was granted by the church and all arrangements were made for a three months' trip in one of Cook's parties. The uncertainty of the health of his wife and little ones during the three months of separation, as well as the perils of travel to which he would naturally be exposed, could not

but cause anxiety which he was unable to conceal in the moments of parting. Having bidden all farewell, he turned at the door and said in a broken voice, "I *hope* the Lord will take care of you." Immediately one of his little girls answered emphatically, "I *know* He will." These words often recurred to the mind of the devoted husband and father and proved a comfort to him when separated from loved ones by sea and land.

With renewed energy, Dr. Willingham resumed his pastoral duties, striving to give to others the benefit of his travels. A reception was given in his home soon after his return, on which occasion curios from the foreign countries were displayed. Crowds came to hear his lectures and sermons on the Holy Land, and numerous invitations to lecture in churches in various towns were received. Having visited heathen countries, he felt more keenly than ever the responsibility resting upon Christians to give the gospel to a dying world, and with increased devotion entered once more upon his missionary activities.

During a morning service several months after his return, Dr. Willingham noticed three strangers seated in different parts of the auditorium; upon speaking to them after the service, he discovered that they were all from Memphis, having been sent as a committee from the First Baptist Church, then without a pastor, to hear him while "off guard." On October 28 a call was extended by this church, which, after a visit to the field, he accepted, arriving in Memphis December 1, 1891.

Among Dr. Willingham's letters is a sheet torn from a magazine, on the blank side of which is written a rough copy of his resignation to the church he was leaving. After concluding the resignation, he wrote in pencil at the bottom of the page:

"God promises to guide.  
God ever has guided;  
God ever will guide.  
*Guide me, Oh thou great Jehovah."*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PASTORATE IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

A great work awaited Dr. Willingham in Memphis. His pastorate in this city, though of short duration, was crowned with glorious results. Situated on the Mississippi River, Memphis was then, as it is now, one of the largest cotton markets of the South; and, as is usual in a large and progressive city, there was a great field of usefulness for a preacher of energy and consecration. The First Baptist Church, which numbered among its former pastors Drs. I. T. Tichenor and W. A. Montgomery, had recently remodeled the house of worship and was ready to co-operate with the new pastor and to press on to higher things. In responding to the many words of welcome at his installation service, Dr. Willingham said:

“This is God’s work, not my work, nor your work. You have said to me, ‘Come in God’s name and do God’s work.’ I have come to do His work, to preach His truth boldly and fearlessly. God’s work is to be done; souls are to be saved; the weak to be strengthened; the fallen lifted up, even if we have to reach down after them.”

Together, pastor and people attempted to do the great work of which he spoke, and their efforts were graciously blessed. The church was built up in all its departments, and the membership increased by more than three hundred during the year and nine months of his pastorate. The warm welcome accorded the new pastor was but an earnest of the kindness and cordiality of the people during his entire pastorate. From the first, the hearts of pastor and people seemed knit together. Loyally was he supported in his undertakings by his board of deacons, of which R. B.



Pegram was chairman, and by the workers in the Sunday school, of which R. G. Craig, one of his staunchest friends, was superintendent.

Among the members of the church was the noted Dr. J. R. Graves. Many of the members were people of means, several of them possessing great wealth. Dr. Willingham earnestly strove to arouse his people that they might give liberally and in proportion to their incomes. One of the deacons once came to him and said:

“You had better quit preaching so much about missions. The man who gives more for your salary than anybody else doesn’t believe in it.”

How the deacon’s advice was received is told in Dr. Willingham’s words:

“I said, ‘I will not preach a mutilated gospel.’ And instead of holding up, I loaded up; and I preached like I never preached before; and, praise God, that same old man that opposed it—whose father was raised with William Carey in London—that man was one of the first to give a subscription for the great work of God, and which I know gave us two hundred additions to the church, because we reached out as we had never done before for lost souls.”

The climate of Memphis and the artesian water used there proved very trying on Dr. Willingham’s health; and frequently, especially during the summer, he was subject to vertigo. Heroically, however, he fought against sickness; and few realized the weakness of his physical condition. His activities were kept up, though at times he was compelled to clutch the stand for support as he preached, unable to see anyone in the congregation before him. His sermons, however, seemed to gain in earnestness and force. Before a Pastors’ Conference held in Nashville, Tennessee, he delivered an address entitled: “Personal Consecration of Preachers.” The principles laid down in this address were adhered to in his own preaching, and to them were

due the effectiveness and power of his ministry. Among other things Dr. Willingham said:

“Brethren in the ministry, preach the Word. Away with flummery and foolishness when men are dying! What cares a man for a discourse on transcendental metaphysics, or the ethics of human affections, when he is dying for bread? Give Christ to the people. The temptation is often to preach self, or show self in the pulpit. Remember that you are there to give God’s message, to hold up to view Christ and His salvation. Say, with old Paul, ‘I come not unto you with excellency of speech. . . . for I determined to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified.’ ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.’

“*Preach Boldly.* You are God’s messenger with God’s message; give it with boldness. ‘The preacher who fears not the world, the world will fear him.’ A preacher should be humble as a little child, but bold as a lion, able to say:

“‘Is there a lamb in all Thy flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Is there a foe before whose face  
I’d fear Thy cause to plead?’

“*Preach directly.* Say to men what they need to hear. Say to Cain, ‘Where is thy brother?’ to Sampson, ‘Take thy head out of the lap of thy Delilah;’ to David, in adultery and murder, ‘Thou art the man;’ to Herod, ‘Thou shouldst not have thy brother’s wife.’ Away with time-serving! There is too much Chinese jugglery—throwing knives all around a man, but always with the purpose of missing him. When a small boy I used to go shooting ducks with a colored servant named Lewis. He would generally report no ducks, but would say to my mother, ‘Missis, I come mighty near gittin’ him; I tell you, I knocked a heap of fidders out.’ Brethren, do not let us be content to ‘make the feathers fly.’ God’s message is for souls; give it direct and be content only with winning souls from sin—the Master wants them.

“*Preach Earnestly.* The pulpit is not a loafing place; do not let people get sleepy and tired just by seeing you there. You have a great message to deliver. Beware, be-

ware, lest your very indifference should impress a dying soul that your message is false or unimportant. Make no compromise; hold up Christ earnestly and faithfully to dying men. . . .

"A preacher may be classic, poetic, polished, cultured, but love-wanting—as cold as an iceberg in mid-ocean. His sermon may be majestic, sublime and beautiful, but cold, deathly cold, chilling all within its reach. Such is the talk of the agnostic, rationalist, and skeptic; but not so of the gospel messenger with his blessed message of salvation.

"Take Christ as an example of consecration. He could not be bought off with all the kingdoms of glory of this world. He could not be laughed or jeered or scorned at, so as to make Him give up His work of preaching the truth. Love of friends, or hate of enemies, were alike unavailing to divert Him. Fatigue, hunger, and thirst were forgotten when souls were to be saved. The exaltation of the transfiguration with heavenly glory gave place to helping a poor boy possessed of a devil. Even dying on Calvary He could remember others to bless and hear a poor sinner to save. Oh, my brother, learn the lesson and then say of this great work to which the Lord has called us, that for which Christ died, and now has committed to us to carry forward:

For this my tears shall fall,  
For this my prayers ascend;  
To this my tears and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.

Mission Sunday schools were fostered by the First Church in various parts of the city. In Dr. Willingham the poor and outcast, the drunkard and the unfortunate found a friend—at times when others would not pity. He was ever ready to assist in any good work. One Sunday afternoon he spoke at a Y. M. C. A. meeting. The day was hot and sultry; the attendance was small; and as he left, thinking that little had been accomplished, he wondered if time and energy had not been wasted. Years after as he was crossing the Pacific on his way to visit the mission fields a man took a seat beside him on the deck of the Minnesota, and said:

“Dr. Willingham, you do not know me, but I can never forget you. Do you remember making a talk one Sunday afternoon at the Y. M. C. A. in Memphis? That was the turning point in my life. I was a young medical student away from home with few serious thoughts. Your talk made a deep impression upon me, and I tried to consecrate my life to Christ. For fourteen years I have been a medical missionary of the Methodist Mission in Soochow. I am now on my way back to my work after my second furlough. If I have accomplished any good, it has been through your influence.”

During the first year of his pastorate in Memphis, Dr. Willingham was assisted in a most successful revival by Dr. W. L. Pickard. In the spring of the following year, Dr. P. T. Hale assisted in a glorious meeting. It seemed as if the very windows of heaven were opened. Many were reclaimed from the paths of sin—among them, some who having spent their lives in wickedness, turned in the evening of life to the Lord; many backsliders, who renewed their allegiance; a saloon keeper; and a drunkard who at first insisted that there was no hope for him. There was great rejoicing in the church at the first communion service after the revival, when those who were to receive the right hand of fellowship formed a circle extending from the front of the church up one aisle and down another. In a letter to Dr. Willingham written soon after Dr. Hale's meeting, Dr. W. R. L. Smith writes:

“Seems to me your success is phenomenal or some such big thing.\* \* \* The only mistake I know in your career was the failure to be born in Georgia. But you got there soon after, and hence these ovations.”

Dr. E. E. Folk also writes:

“I rejoice with you in your grand meeting in Memphis. Thanks for the new subscribers obtained. It was just like you. I wish we had a thousand like you in the state. Then

none of our denominational interests would be left to languish. I hope you will have a successful meeting in Jackson."

Dr. Willingham was also very much interested in Mercer University, located in Macon, Georgia, the home of his youth and early manhood; and, while pastor in Memphis, accepted an invitation to deliver a series of lectures there. After the resignation of Dr. G. A. Nunnally as President of this institution, Dr. W. A. Montgomery wrote an article for one of the religious papers suggesting Dr. Willingham as a suitable man for the Presidency. After naming the qualities which a college President should possess, Dr. Montgomery continues:

"Now, where can Mercer find such a man? Many good and true men have been suggested. Against none of these have I aught to say. But I hope I may be pardoned if I suggest another, who, more than any man I know, seems to me to be the man. I allude to Robert J. Willingham, D.D., of Memphis, Tenn. I have had occasion to be thrown with him a good deal, and, in all the requisites for a good college president, I have never met his equal. He is a big-brained, warm-hearted, broad-gauged man. As an organizer, and controller of forces around him, I have never seen him surpassed. He is a born general. Under his wise management, I should look for Mercer to take on new life and enter upon still increasing usefulness. I do not know whether he could be induced to undertake the work, but feel sure if he could be induced to do so, the future of our college would be assured."

While pastor in Memphis, Dr. Willingham continued his activities as Vice-President of the Foreign Mission Board for Tennessee, and as a member of the Centennial Committee. Every effort was made to arouse the people in behalf of Foreign Missions and to make 1892 a great year.

October of Centennial year was to be a great missionary month throughout the state. Special collections were to be taken in the churches, and it was hoped that there would

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be a large ingathering. The offering in Dr. Willingham's church was to be received on the first Sabbath in October. Earnestly and prayerfully did he strive in the weeks that preceded to impress upon his people the magnitude of the work, that they might realize the responsibility resting upon them and give liberally to the great cause. On September 27, just a few days before this Sabbath, a son, Holcombe Bacon, was born to the pastor. Their hearts burning with the love of missions, the father and mother dedicated their little son, born in Centennial year, to the Lord, praying that in the years to come He would call him to preach the gospel in heathen lands. They gave their best to the Lord, little dreaming that after five brief years of blessing the little one would be called to a greater work above.

In 1893, Dr. H. A. Tupper resigned as Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board after twenty-one years of faithful service. Until his successor could be secured Dr. H. H. Harris, Professor of Greek at Richmond College and President of the Foreign Mission Board, was appointed Secretary *ad interim*. In a letter written in June to Dr. Willingham in regard to his work as Vice-President for Tennessee, Dr. Harris requested him to suggest some man whom he thought suitable for the Secretaryship. This portion of Dr. Harris' letter is as follows:

"The place, as you well know, is difficult to fill. Among essential requirements are sound judgment about men and things, sympathetic and intelligent interest in missions, and business habits, including promptness, accuracy and financial foresight. Very desirable qualifications are ability to speak and write well, pleasant manners united with great discretion (for the Secretary must be intrusted with many confidential communications), ability to endure in silence when assailed justly or unjustly, and a willingness to devote all these qualities to the service of the denomination at a salary of \$2,500.00 a year, with no tenure of office except from year to year. We do not expect to find all that we

desire in any one man, but shall be very much obliged if you will give us, at your earliest convenience, the name and your honest estimate of the fitness of anyone in your state, or elsewhere, who seems to you available."

Scarcely more than a month had passed when another letter from Dr. Harris was received, which, upon opening, Dr. Willingham read with astonishment. The letter is as follows:

"RICHMOND, VA., July 24, 1893.

"It gives me pleasure in behalf of a Committee consisting of Drs. Cooper, Hatcher, Landrum, Whitfield and myself to inform you that, after long and prayerful consideration and careful canvassing of many excellent brethren who were thought of in connection with the Corresponding Secretaryship of this Board, the choice has fallen upon you. We trust that your election at a meeting held yesterday afternoon will come to you not only as a call from your brethren, but even as a call from the Master through His servants, and that you may find it to be your pleasure as well as duty to take this responsibility and glorify God in this important position.

"Your connection with the Convention has made you somewhat acquainted with the duties of the office (Cons., Art. VII) and the salary attached (\$2,500). If there are points on which you would desire special information, it will be given so far as we can."

"It is eminently desirable that you enter upon the duties not later than September 1. We shall, therefore, be glad to hear from you as early as practicable in a matter of so grave importance."

Dr. Willingham was completely overcome with surprise at the thought of the vast responsibilities involved in the office to which he had been elected. The answer of this call was not decided upon without a struggle—the greatest through which he had passed since entering the ministry. Should he give up the pastorate—the work to which Providence had unmistakably led him, the work which he loved so well and in which he was so successful? As Secretary,

he would have unlimited opportunities to advance *through the preaching of others* the Kingdom of God in heathen lands—but must *he personally* give up preaching to lost men? His own feelings, however, must be put aside and the will of God ascertained and followed. In his perplexity he wrote to Dr. Harris:

“MEMPHIS, TENN., July 27, 1893.

“Your favor received this morning and the whole matter takes me so much by surprise I do not know what to say. Let me pray and think over it. May the Lord direct.

“P. S. Should I go to Richmond last of next week to confer with you and survey the field will you be there? I will write again.”

Not only must divine guidance be sought in earnest supplication, but also through the counsel of men whom he knew to be capable of advising in regard to the decision of so momentous a question. In reply to this letter asking for advice, Dr. E. W. Warren, his father’s pastor and a warm friend, wrote:

“MACON, GA., July 29, 1893.

“You are called to a very important position—the direction and support of one hundred missionaries, and to the wise and Godly direction of all our great work abroad. Accept it; lay yourself upon this altar of active and Christly service unreservedly. I want to say a few things:

“1. You will have two millions of masters, but you will be under obligation to please but One.

“2. You will find ignorant pastors and unco-operative brethren by the thousands; but God always has enough willing givers to keep His work going and to make it successful.

“3. You will find dissatisfaction and disaffection among the missionaries, but a wise and conservative Board will come to your aid.

\* \* \* \* \*

“4. You will find censorious critics among your brethren, but so did all your predecessors and our Savior.

“I really think, after giving thought and prayer to the



subject since yesterday, that this call is of God. Don't decline it without much prayer. May the Lord direct you."

Dr. T. P. Bell, who had formerly occupied the position of Assistant Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, but was at that time Corresponding Secretary of the Sunday School Board, wrote:

"The position is one of no little honor, and vast responsibility; of much work and, in some respects, of no little privation. In it a man can make his impress upon the denominational life as he can in few other positions, and his influence is far-reaching. Especially just now will it be a position requiring patience, extraordinary wisdom, and ability to endure criticism without losing one's patience.

"I pray for you that the Lord will give you his guidance. If you have that consciously, whatever comes in the future, whether success or failure, you will have that in the heart which lifts you above both, or either."

Early in August, Dr. Willingham appeared before the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond. Several days were spent in discussing with Dr. Harris and other members of the Board the phases of the work, and he left with the conviction that truly God was calling him to give up the pastorate that he might devote his every effort to the great cause of Foreign Missions. His resignation to his church was as follows:

"MEMPHIS, TENN., August 9, '93.

"MY DEAR BRETHREN: I was notified about two weeks ago that I had been elected as Corresponding Secretary of our Foreign Mission Board, located at Richmond, Va. As I had received no intimation that I had even been thought of by anyone in connection with the position, it was quite a surprise to me. I have earnestly, prayerfully considered the subject for two weeks, and, though the thought of leaving you has pained my heart much, and I have almost shuddered as I have considered the vast responsibilities of the new position, still, believing that it is God's work, and that as His

servant I must respond to this call, I ask you to release me as pastor after August 31.

“With a heart full of love for you, my dear brethren, and deep appreciation of your many, *very many* and continued kindnesses, and praying God’s blessings and guidance for you, I am,

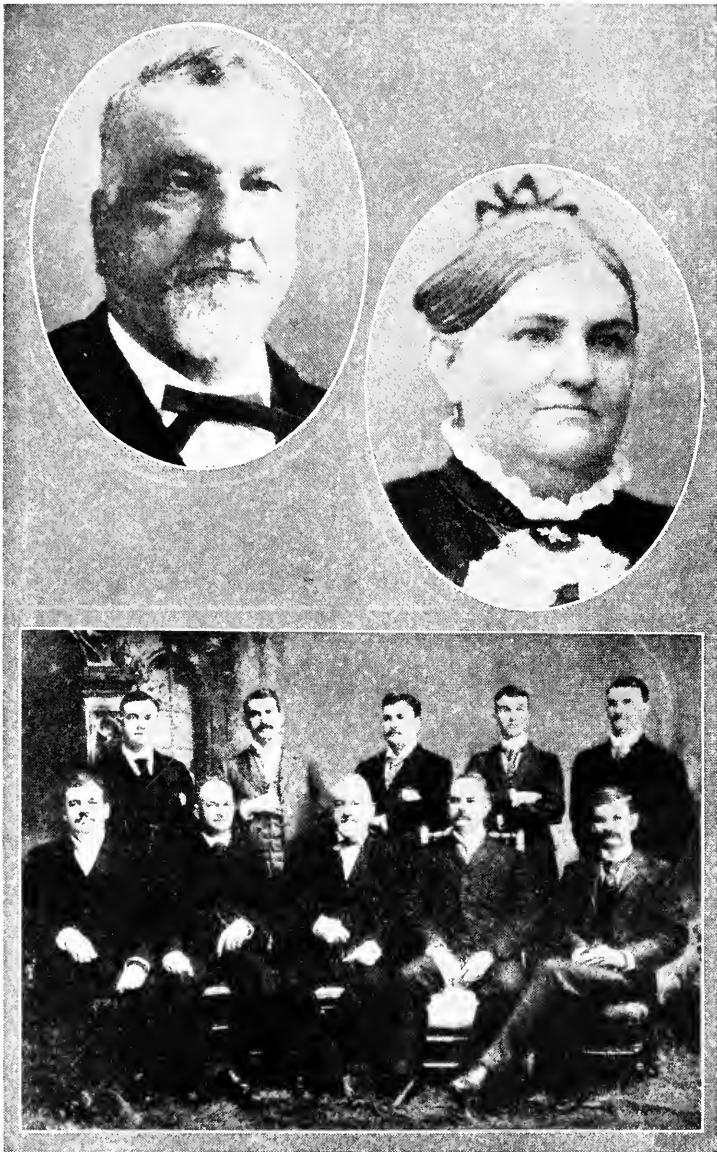
Yours lovingly,  
(Signed) “R. J. WILLINGHAM.”

The members of the First Church had made every effort to induce him to reconsider his decision and to remain as their pastor, but finally had consented to give him up, realizing that he had been called to a greater sphere of usefulness. Every attention was showered upon him and his family, and every possible arrangement made that the trip to Richmond might be a pleasant one.

A large congregation gathered at the morning service August 27, to hear the last sermon ever preached by him in the capacity of pastor. In the evening, a farewell service was held, in which the other Baptist churches of the city joined. Many in the great congregation were weeping freely at the close of the service, for the relation between him and the Baptists of Memphis was most tender, and the thought of separation was indeed painful.

As the train bore Dr. Willingham to Richmond on those August days in 1893, there was gratitude in his heart that his labors in the pastorate had been graciously blessed; and that he had been called to the greater work of sending the gospel to a world lying in darkness. Conscious, however, of his own weakness, he realized that divine strength, wisdom, and grace must be sought for the vast responsibilities that would rest upon him as Secretary, and from his heart ascended the petition:

“Use me, Oh, Master, Father, use me; use me that Thy Kingdom may come, that Thy will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”



B. J. WILLINGHAM AND WIFE. I. J. WILLINGHAM, HIS FATHER AND BROTHERS.



## CHAPTER IX.

### ENTERING UPON HIS GREAT LIFE WORK.

On Tuesday evening, August 30, 1893, Dr. Willingham and his family arrived in Richmond, Virginia. They were welcomed at the depot by Dr. Charles Winston and Mr. William Ellyson, both active members of the Foreign Mission Board, the latter being also Corresponding Secretary of the Virginia Baptist State Mission Board. Mr. Ellyson escorted the newcomers to his home, where his sister, Miss Bettie, acting as hostess in the absence of Mrs. Ellyson, did everything possible to make her ten guests feel at home in the strange city. An urgent invitation was extended for the entire family to spend the night at Mr. Ellyson's home; but Dr. Willingham, not wishing to presume upon his host's hospitality, insisted that several should stay at the house only half a block away which had been rented and partially furnished. All were glad, however, to meet around Mr. Ellyson's board the following morning. This beautiful act of hospitality shown Dr. Willingham upon entering the work was but an earnest of the many kindnesses of the Ellysons during the twenty-one years of his Secretaryship.

On September 1, Dr. Willingham assumed the duties of the Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, thus entering upon his work at the close of the first century of modern missions. Just one hundred years previous, on June 13, 1793, William Carey, the pioneer of Modern Missions, had sailed from England to India to begin an assault upon heathenism. What astounding changes and radical transformations that century had witnessed! And yet how stupendous was the task which still confronted God's people!

That we may enter into sympathy with the new Secretary; that we may understand the encouragement which he derived from the triumphs of the gospel over heathenism, the crushing weight of responsibility that overpowered him, the glorious opportunities which ever urged, "Go forward," inspiring him to untiring effort and unremitting toil, let us glance for a moment at the missionary aspect and prospect in 1893.

A wonderful change had taken place in the attitude of *Christians* toward Foreign Missions! Indifference or bitter antagonism had met Carey's first efforts. In less than three years after his departure from England, missionary enthusiasm had been awakened by his letters—enthusiasm which rapidly spread through Europe and America; and in 1893, Christianity if not wholly awake to the task of evangelizing the world was at least steadily awakening to missionary zeal. Hundreds of organizations representing practically all denominations had been formed; thousands of missionaries had been sent out to the ends of the earth, and millions of dollars were being contributed annually to the great cause.

Equally marvelous were the transformations which had taken place in heathen lands. The great nations, which in Carey's time were closed not only to religion but also to commerce, had one by one opened their doors to the outside world; and their millions of inhabitants were now accessible to the Gospel. The danger of molestation, persecution, and death which had formerly threatened the missionary had given way to legal protection. Instead of two-thirds of the world's area being unknown, every continent and island had been explored and ocean liners, railways and telegraph and postal facilities had greatly lessened the task of evangelizing the world. Hundreds of languages and dialects had been mastered and made the medium for the circulation of the Bible.

The gospel had proved itself able to uplift the most degraded heathen and also the highest. Entire communities and peoples had been raised from the lowest depths of savagery to a high degree of Christian civilization. Thousands of women had been reclaimed from the low estate in which heathenism had ever held them to lives of Christian happiness. Millions had turned to Christ. Churches had been planted, schools built, Christian homes established, and an army of native preachers, evangelists, and teachers trained for Christian service.

Radical and revolutionary changes were still taking place. Several of the heathen nations were in a state of transition. Japan was making unparalleled progress intellectually, industrially, socially, and politically. Anxious to receive Western civilization, she was also eager to learn more of Christianity, and her people were crowding even the theaters to hear the gospel story. Everywhere pagan religions were in a state of decline and decay; and the people, turning from their idols, were eager to hear of the true God. On every hand there were "new doors opening, new fields inviting, new demands urging, new successes cheering." It was indeed the "crisis of missions."

"Crisis" implies both opportunity and responsibility—the chance either to succeed or ignominiously to fail. Only a beginning had been made. What had been done was as nothing compared with what remained to be done. Millions of souls were still unreached. Delay would mean irreparable damage. Nations in a stage of transition can be either molded or marred. Through the doors which God had opened for his workmen, Satan's agents were entering and attempting to preoccupy the field. The same steamer carried missionaries and rum to the same heathen port, sometimes in the proportion of one missionary to fifty thousand barrels of rum. Western commerce was also introducing Western vices. People were turning from their idols, but

unless the gospel were given them they would accept the infidel, agnostic and rationalistic ideas which were being scattered broad-cast throughout their lands. Delay meant new barriers to be overcome. The blood of a thousand million souls would be required of that generation. Surely the King's business required haste!

Southern Baptists had nobly worked for Foreign Missions, first through the Triennial Convention, and after their separation from their Northern brethren through the Southern Baptist Convention, organized in 1845. Two Corresponding Secretaries of the Foreign Mission Board had preceded Dr. Willingham, the statesmanlike J. B. Taylor, who, during the period of beginnings, inaugurated policies which are still in force, and the consecrated and efficient H. A. Tupper, who, during twenty-one years of service, saw the work quadrupled both in contributions and workers. In 1893 Southern Baptists were supporting mission stations in six foreign countries, in which ninety-eight missionaries, including men and women, were at work, assisted by a force of seventy-nine native helpers, the native church membership on these fields numbering almost three thousand.

Encouraging as was the progress which had been made since the beginning of the work, the new Secretary was, notwithstanding, confronted by serious obstacles. A new movement, called the "Gospel Mission," had been started by several Southern Baptist missionaries, who, while working in China, had originated ideas which put them out of harmony with the Board. Startling attacks were made by these missionaries, who were opposed to the Southern Baptist Convention and its Boards, maintaining that according to the New Testament plan a church or group of churches should choose their own missionary, select his field, and fix his salary, and that he should be responsible to the appointing body alone. They also believed that the missionary should be allowed to remove from one field to another or to



return to this country at pleasure. Unmindful of the terrible cost of health and life that would be involved in certain fields, they insisted that, for the sake of economy, he should wear native dress, live in a native house, and subsist on native food. At least one of the leaders of the movement believed that the missionary should be allowed to suffer hardship and even death if his means of support were not furnished in due time. These men were also opposed to the employment of natives as pastors, evangelists, or Bible women; also, to the appropriation of missionary money for native schools, as they believed that it was the missionary's duty merely to proclaim the gospel and through the native church to nurture the spiritual life of the convert. The movement had attracted much attention both in China and in this country, greatly damaging the work.

Although the majority of Southern Baptists were loyal to their Convention and its Boards, in certain sections of the country many were found who sympathized with the Gospel Mission movement, and serious difficulties marred the co-operative fellowship which had formerly existed. In the religious press the agitation was waged, many articles appearing both for and against the movement. During the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1893, while Dr. Willingham was yet pastor in Memphis, there was some excitement in regard to this movement. Ever the friend of justice, Dr. Willingham, though not in accord with the views of the “Gospel Missioners,” urged that one of these missionaries, just returned from the field, be allowed to present his views to the Convention. This speech of Dr. Willingham's, one of his first before the Convention, brought him into prominence before that body, and was in a measure responsible for his call several months later to the Secretaryship of the Foreign Mission Board.

Other agitations disturbed unity and harmony of spirit of Southern Baptists. There were some in the denomina-

tion who, dissatisfied with the machinery of the organizations of the various Boards, were anxious for radical changes. In the religious papers, discussions between this new party and those who stood by the existing Boards were carried on in numerous articles under such titles as: "Are the Expenses of Our Foreign Mission Board Excessive?" "One or Two"; "Business Principles in the Conduct of Religious Enterprises"; "Assistant Corresponding Secretaryship"; "Why Not Dissolve the Convention?" A "Committee on Methods" had been appointed to investigate the policies of the various Boards. Concerning the report of this committee before the Convention, the Religious Herald, May 25, 1893, writes:

"Mention was made in the editorial letter of certain rumors which at the date of the letter were current concerning the report of the Committee on Methods, etc. It seemed to be generally believed that the most radical measures would be recommended, such, for example, as the resignation of all the secretaries, the abolition of the double secretaryship, changes in the location of the boards, etc. Whether there was sufficient basis for these rumors or not could not be ascertained. When, however, the report was submitted it was very mild. It did recommend the abolition of the assistant secretaryship, but, as the boards had requested that this matter be left in their hands, this conservative course was not adopted. The Convention with practical unanimity adopted the recommendation of the Committee remanding the election of salaried officers to the boards."

Another trouble was retarding missionary work. Throughout the entire country, financial depression prevailed. So critical had the situation become that a special session of Congress had been called during the heated summer season for the purpose of considering ways and means to relieve the stringency. This state of affairs had affected missionary receipts. The Foreign Mission Board was burdened with a heavy debt, and drafts were pouring in at the rate of almost \$3,000 a week.

Looking beyond the obstacles and responsibilities connected with the work to the many causes for encouragement and the glorious opportunities, Dr. Willingham entered his new office with a spirit of optimism and enthusiasm. His confidence that He who had called him into the work would guide and sustain him in the performance of its duties is seen in his first editorial in the *Foreign Mission Journal*, entitled "Taking Hold," which is as follows:

"On the first of September the new Corresponding Secretary, R. J. Willingham, assumed the duties of the office to which he had been called by the Foreign Mission Board.

"It was with much trembling and reluctance that he accepted the position filled by such noble, pure and good men as Taylor and Tupper, knowing also of the vast responsibilities and far-reaching results of the work which is to be done. No man could undertake it in his own strength.

"He feels, however, that it is God's work, and in response to His call takes hold.

"God can take the weak things of men and use them for the glory of His name. In the Foreign Mission Board the Secretary has about him one of the most earnest, prayerful, godly set of men which can be found anywhere. They are a tower of strength in wisdom, faith and love. This means much to a Secretary, and weighed much in deciding the question of acceptance.

"From all over the land have come privately and publicly kind words of sympathy and co-operation, and, best of all, from near and far, home and abroad, have come earnest assurances that daily prayers go up for the Secretary that God may give him wisdom, strength and guidance. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' The work is vast—thousands of churches, pastors and peoples to be reached, hundreds on the foreign field to be directed. Any of us might in weakness cry, 'Who is sufficient for these things, Oh, Lord, excuse me!' But rather instead let each of us listen to our Master's last Commission and promise, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, . . . and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Hearing this, know-

ing of His power, heeding His command, realizing His presence, which one of us cannot say joyfully, 'Use me, Oh, Master! Father, use me, use me, that Thy kingdom may come, that Thy will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.'

By a happy coincidence, the first letter read by the new Secretary upon entering the Foreign Mission Rooms, was a tender, fatherly one from his predecessor, Dr. Tupper.

Numerous articles appeared in the religious press welcoming him into the work and introducing him to the denomination. In an editorial in the *Foreign Mission Journal*, August, 1893, Dr. H. H. Harris writes:

Our readers have known something of the painful anxiety with which the Board has been seeking a Corresponding Secretary. The position is laborious, responsible, almost thankless, but full of opportunities for doing the best service to the cause of Christ. It demands a rare combination of talents, fervent spirituality and breadth of view, with practical business sense and attention to details; popular power, both in private and in the pulpit, with ability to keep accounts correctly and state them clearly; loving sympathy for missionaries and applicants, but with firmness to say no when necessary.

"The search for such a man has been conducted carefully and prayerfully all through the Baptist host from Maryland to Texas, and has resulted in the choice of Dr. R. J. Willingham, of Memphis, Tenn. We do not imagine that he or any other one man possesses all the qualifications that are desirable for the position, but only that, by the grace of God, the help of the brethren, and a deal of hard work, he will come nearer to filling it than any other we could get. He takes charge at a most unpropitious time. Our treasury is not only empty, but burdened with a heavy debt, the finances of the whole country are out of joint, a third of the Convention year has passed, the new Secretary will have to do a year's work in eight months, and will sorely need the active assistance of the brethren in every state.

"For five years Dr. Willingham has been the very efficient Vice-President of our Board for Tennessee. He brings to his duties as Secretary some acquaintance with missions,

a vigorous body thirty-nine years old, great capacity for work, fine talents both for public speaking and for influencing men privately, and so great an interest in mission work that he leaves a delightful pastorate with a salary of \$3,000 a year, besides marriage fees and other such additions, to accept the secretaryship at \$2,500 and no perquisites. He rightly says that he cannot call on others to go and to give unless he is willing to make sacrifices for the cause.  
 . . . ”

Only a few expressions from the many editorials can be cited. We find:

“A success in everything he has undertaken;” “A man of deep spirituality;” “A most consecrated man and zealous Christian;” “A big and loving soul;” “An eloquent tongue;” “Business experience;” “Excellent man of business;” “First-class business man;” “A bright and attractive manner;” “Consecration and sanctified common sense;” “Magnetic personal appearance;” “Capable of the best service;” “Vigorous physique;” “Splendid physique;” “Untiring energy;” “Brimming with enthusiasm, and capable of ever so much tough work;” “No man in the denomination is physically able to do more hard work than Robert J. Willingham.”

And who that knew R. J. Willingham during the years that followed but realizes how completely he surrendered the gifts of tongue, mind, and heart to the work which became the passion of his life, and how unreservedly he laid that strong physique on the altar of sacrifice, heeding not that it was being wrecked in the Master's service!

## CHAPTER X.

### “TAKING HOLD.”

For many years the headquarters of the Foreign Mission Board have been in the Merchants' National Bank Building, 1103 East Main Street. In 1893 three rooms afforded sufficient space for the conduct of the work. Besides the Corresponding Secretary the office force at this time consisted of a clerk and a stenographer, the latter being employed for only half day. Mr. J. C. Williams, a banker and broker, whose business house was located near-by, was treasurer of the Board and came in when his services were needed.

A Board of remarkably strong and able men supported the new Secretary. Dr. H. H. Harris, the great scholar and teacher, was President of this body. Having been a member of the Board for seventeen years, during seven of which he had served as its presiding officer, he was thoroughly conversant with the many phases of the work and was ever ready to assist Dr. Willingham in learning the many details.

Besides the officers already mentioned, the local Board at this time consisted of the following members: C. H. Winston, W. E. Hatcher, John Pollard, L. R. Thornhill, C. H. Ryland, J. B. Hutson, W. D. Thomas, W. W. Landrum, George Cooper, T. P. Mathews, R. H. Pitt, Theodore Whitfield, H. R. Pollard, William Ellyson, W. L. Wright, A. B. Clarke, H. C. Burnett.

Never was a Secretary supported by a Board of more consecrated, earnest, and wise counselors; often during the years that followed, Dr. Willingham spoke of the ability and wisdom of these men, who, during the beginning of his term of office, shaped the policies of the work.

Upon entering the new office, Dr. Willingham threw himself heart and soul into the work. It was a God-given task, and, therefore, called for his best efforts; then, too, he loved Southern Baptists, and it was a joy to labor for them. He appreciated the confidence which they had placed in him and endeavored to repay that confidence by carrying on the work intrusted to him in as faithful, conscientious, businesslike, and economical manner as possible. A vast amount of work confronted him. The Convention which had met the preceding May had elected no Assistant Secretary to succeed Dr. T. P. Bell, who had recently resigned, and the new Corresponding Secretary soon found himself "doing two men's work—or, rather, trying to." Never in his large and busy pastorates had he felt the pressure of such hard labor. To one of the missionaries he writes:

"My work keeps me very busy. On account of the financial stringency, we are trying to get along without an Assistant Secretary, but it means hard work for me. Still, I enjoy it. I *love* missions and I have good health. Best of all, I have the privilege of talking to our Father and having His guidance and grace. At times all I can do is to cry to Him for wisdom and guidance. There are so many questions which come up, so many views, opinions, and ideas."

An interesting picture of the Secretary at work in his office is given in his own words in the following article, entitled, "A Day in the Mission Rooms":

"Let us spend a day together in our Foreign Mission rooms. It is the office of about one and a half million of Missionary Baptists. If each one of these could be made to feel a deep interest in what is being done there, what glorious results would follow.

"Nearly opposite the United States Postoffice building, on Main Street, Richmond, Virginia, is the Merchants' National Bank building, and in the third story of this are the Mission Rooms. They are in the rear of the building, but, being so high and in the rear, gives two advantages; one is

the fine light and view; from the windows we look for about five miles on the beautiful James River, with the ships coming in from the ocean. Another advantage, we are cut off from the noise and turmoil of Main Street.

"The rooms are opened at about eight o'clock in the morning. Come in and let us begin the day by invoking God's guidance and blessings before anything else is done. There are so many questions and matters of importance which come up through the day that one needs guidance from on high.

"Here lies the mail, many letters and postal cards, and newspapers and pamphlets. Some from this country, some from across the seas; you have not time to read all the letters. These, with money for missions, are put in this drawer. These, with subscriptions for the Journal, are put in this other. There are letters asking questions; letters counseling and advising; letters of application to go as missionaries; letters from the missionaries. Then here are letters that have no possible connection with missions, but must be answered. Read here and see how sweet and encouraging many of these letters are. How many say, 'I am praying for you and the work.' Often these missives are an inspiration. You ask, 'Do any find fault?' Well, remarkably few. Of course, earnest brethren and sisters make suggestions, and we are glad for them to do so.

"Will you read these letters from the missionaries? They will make you glad and sorry, and laugh and weep, and praise and pray. Here they tell of success, God's gracious blessings, and then of trials and backslidings of some; here they tell of quaint situations and experiences; and here of sickness and plague and death in a strange foreign land. Oh! Christian at home, read the experiences of faithful, God-serving missionaries and serve Him better.

"After all letters are read and the entries of moneys made on our books, we must now begin to answer the letters and send receipts. To send forty to fifty letters takes some time. Some days the number is smaller; some days, much larger. For some letters it takes a long time to get up information. A brother can dash off a question in a minute which will take hard study and work for two hours, or a half day, to get up the figures, facts, and statistics for a clear, definite answer. After answering letters and making



entries, we must get off tracts and Journals, as requested, and make deposit of funds in the bank. This work takes until two or three o'clock. The books must then be posted and new business taken up.

"Many callers come to the Mission Rooms, but it is generally understood that it is not a good loafing place, as those employed there are kept quite busy. All who come to talk on Foreign Missions are doubly welcome. Brethren come in to read the papers, for there on the table lie papers from all of the states in our Convention, and also from other sections. Here are papers from Mexico, England, Japan, China, Brazil, India, and Africa.

"We turn to 'Our Picture Gallery.' This is a large drawer in which we keep pictures of our missionaries, also of their houses of worship, and such other pictures of interest as they send.

"In this large room in which we now stand is where the Board meets regularly once a month or oftener if necessary. The Secretary has this for his office, and visitors are also received here. In the small room adjoining are kept the curios which have been brought by the missionaries from various lands. These consist of robes, implements of war, household articles, images, idols, etc. It takes several cases to hold them all. In this room are kept, also, a fine supply of tracts on all of our mission stations.

"In the next small room the Journal clerk stays. Here we have on file all letters ever received by the Board.

"The rules of the Convention require that not only shall all letters received be kept on file, but also copies of letters sent from the office. Frequent reference is made to these letters and the copies.

"The rooms are furnished plainly, but neatly. We wish every brother and sister in our bounds could visit us and see and make inquiries, and thus be better informed. Remember, when you come to Richmond, to visit your Foreign Mission Office and see for yourself how the work is carried on."

Before turning from this picture, the reader will enjoy glancing at a few of the letters written by the new Secretary in answering his mail; and, in doing so, he can catch

the spirit of the man. His letters were characteristic—usually brief and to the point, but marked by a personal note.

The following two letters were written on successive days—one to the pastor of a church which had sent in a large contribution; the other, to a woman who had made an individual gift:

“My heart was made glad this morning at the reception of your letter. No other church has made so liberal a gift, so far as I know, since my coming into office. In these times of depression, this is doubly appreciated. Give my love to your people. It makes me feel like saying, ‘God bless old Georgia.’

“I will take a little time to select your missionary and will let you know. I want such a noble church to have a noble missionary—one who is earnest and faithful.

“Our debt is still burdening us, but I trust that the hearts of the people will soon be opened as wide as that of your church; if so, we would have no debt.

“God bless you and make this year a fulfillment of Malachi 3:10.

\* \* \*

“Your kind favor with fifty cents for Foreign Missions received. Many thanks.

“The Master does not look at the amount, but at the heart which gives it. There has never been a contribution made that has done so much good in the world as the widow’s mite, small in the sight of men, but great and potential as used of God.

“I trust that the Master will guide and bless you abundantly in heart and home, and that at all times you may realize His presence and love.”

To a worker in Louisiana, he writes:

“Let me commend you for your effort to get the churches in Louisiana to give systematically. We need to recognize the fact that giving is worshipping as truly as praying and preaching.”

Again he writes:

"I think you will find that those who are finding fault the most are not generally the people who are anxious to give much."

To an applicant he writes:

"Speak to me as to a brother. I feel like I am close kin to the missionaries."

To one who is unable to go to the foreign field he writes:

"Do you know that many who are doing the most for Foreign Missions in our land are those who felt called to go, and the way seemed closed against them? They are doing as much for the work as those who have gone. \* \* \* We need foreign missionaries here to stir the hearts of the people. If we cannot move the hearts of those who love Christ, what can we do there?"

His letters to the missionaries were frequent; it was ever a joy to him to read of the achievements of these noble men and women and to write to them words of cheer and encouragement. In the very beginning, he opened his heart to all of them and seemed to understand just how to enter into their lives—to sympathize with them in their sorrows, to aid them in their difficulties, and to rejoice with them in their triumphs. The missionaries soon realized that he was personally interested in each one of them, and they in turn felt free to write him of what was nearest their hearts. In the following extract from one of his early letters, his affection for the missionaries is described:

"Somehow I feel that I am close kinsman to all the missionaries and enjoy having them here in my home, meeting their relatives as I go around to the Conventions, and getting letters from them in the work. We are workers together for God, and as you brethren stand to the front and some of us stay at home and 'hold the ropes,' we rejoice in your prosperity and in the Lord's blessing upon you."

Dr. Willingham's interest in the missionaries extended also to their relations. Many of them he met at the various Conventions and in his travels; it was always a pleasure to him to talk to them of their loved ones far away, and to relate to them any facts about the work in which he thought they would be interested. Others he knew only through correspondence. Often a few lines would express to a fond parent the sympathy of his own father-heart.

To Rev. T. J. Walne, he writes:

"I can better understand the missionary spirit of your son, as I learn more of your own warm heart."

To the parents of one of the China missionaries he writes:

"You ought to be profoundly grateful that the Lord has taken one of your children to carry the glad news of the gospel of His Son to those in heathen darkness. I would rather one of my boys be an ambassador for Christ than President of the United States."

The first new missionaries to be appointed during Dr. Willingham's administration were four young men from the Seminary. They arrived in Richmond on the morning of February 23, as the examination before the Board was to take place on the afternoon of that day. After a busy morning at the office in which they looked over their applications, discussed the fields to which they wished to be appointed, stood the medical examination required by the Board, and became acquainted with things in general, they accompanied Dr. Willingham home for dinner. Company was not unusual in the Willingham home, but the entertaining of new missionaries marked an event in Mrs. Willingham's life. Without discussing her plans with her husband, she had gone in person to the market and purchased a fine turkey. Assured that her dinner was worthy of her

guests, whom she felt honored in entertaining, she welcomed them most cordially. After all were seated at the bountiful board, Dr. Willingham turned to her in mingled surprise and playfulness and exclaimed, "Why did you prepare such a dinner for these young brethren? They will think we live like this always!" She replied that, like the old Scotch schoolmaster who always took off his hat to his boys because he did not know what great men might be before him, she did not know what future Judson or Yates she might be entertaining, and she wished him to have the very best dinner she could serve. The young men accepted her explanation, and did full justice to the meal. The lesson, however, was learned by the hostess, and in the future simple home fare was served the guests; and, indeed, for the hundreds of missionaries and applicants that accepted the hospitality of that home any other course would have been impossible. About a year after moving to Richmond, Dr. Willingham rented a home on Fifth Street. The house, an old ante-bellum home, was quite large, and he let the missionaries understand that it was always open to them and their children. Some came for only a meal, but many of them made it their home for several days at a time. He felt that it was a privilege to entertain these noble servants of God, and realized that in this way a personal intimacy was established which was mutually helpful in the work.

The editing of the *Foreign Mission Journal* was also the duty of the Corresponding Secretary. In the very first Journal published after he became editor, he writes that he "knows little of editorial work, but loves missions, missionaries, and missionary people, and hopes the Journal will be for the strengthening, helping, and blessing of all that conduces to the advancement of Christ's kingdom on the earth." Soon after taking charge, he changed printers, secured new advertisements, obtained many new subscriptions; and the Journal, instead of running at an expense

to the Board, was able not only to be self-supporting, but by advertisements to defray part of the traveling expenses of the Secretary, and often at the end of the year to pay the sum of several hundred dollars into the treasury of the Board.

Realizing what an important factor in the work the Journal should be as the mouthpiece of missionaries, board, and secretary to Southern Baptists, Dr. Willingham endeavored to publish a magazine that would appeal to the people, stimulate their interest in Foreign Missions, and inspire them to greater liberality. He also sought to increase the circulation, and in his first Journal set as a goal 10,000 new subscribers. The Journal grew in popularity; in eight weeks' time between 6,000 and 7,000 new subscriptions had been secured, many of which were due to the personal efforts of the Secretary at the various meetings and Conventions.

The second Tuesday of each month was a busy day for the Secretary. On this day the Board held its regular monthly meeting, although adjourned meetings and called meetings were held whenever necessary. The Board at this time consisted of: Four professors, two lawyers, one physician, seven pastors, one banker, one broker, one merchant, one editor, one college treasurer and librarian, and the Corresponding Secretary. Throughout the years this plan of electing the members from the various professions and business callings has been maintained, in order that the many questions of so diverse character may be viewed from every standpoint before decisions are reached. Concerning the Board members, Dr. Willingham writes:

"The brethren are selected with a view to their piety, integrity, capacity, and interest in the mission work. No better set of men could be found anywhere than those composing the Board."

The work which came before the Board was usually first referred to committees for consideration. There was a standing committee for each mission field, and one for each phase of the work. In this way each member was particularly interested in a certain department of the work, and to it he gave his time and special consideration. The various committees usually met the day preceding that on which the meeting of the Board was held, and after careful consideration, made recommendations to be presented to the entire Board. The Board meetings were always opened and closed with prayer; and often, in the midst of an important discussion, business would be suspended until a special plea for divine guidance could be made. Dr. Willingham always made a report of the work of the past month; he also made recommendations for the ensuing month and asked for instructions. The various phases of the work were then discussed. The many questions usually required hours of consideration, and the Secretary generally returned home weary in mind and body, but rejoicing in the progress of the work. In one of his first editorials for the Journal, Dr. Willingham writes:

“Some people seem to think that the Board is a great big, overbearing, domineering monster of a thing. Oh, that you could meet with these faithful preachers, deacons and Sunday school workers—many of them gray-headed men—and see them reverently implore wisdom from above, and then quietly, carefully, for hours, consider the important questions which the brethren have intrusted to them.”

After a visit to Richmond, Dr. P. T. Hale writes in the Birmingham Baptist:

“I attended a meeting of the Foreign Mission Board, and was struck with the amount of time and attention these men freely give this work, and with their deep and fraternal interest in the missionaries, and their business-like care to wisely apply every dollar intrusted to them by the churches, as their stewards. Dr. Willingham, the great-

brained and big-hearted Secretary, has the business of the Board on his mind, and its interests on his heart. After seeing more of his work and zeal and plans, I am more than ever convinced that the Lord selected him for this great work. Let us not merely send him money to send forth laborers, but pray for him and for them."

About one-third of the Secretary's time must be spent outside of Richmond. There was enough work at the office to keep him busy, but his presence was needed throughout the South. Southern Baptists were "just in the A. B. C. of this mission work," and needed both missionary education and inspiration. Missionary information must be disseminated; missionary enthusiasm must be infused into different churches; those who were interested must be aroused to greater liberality; Conventions must be attended that pastors and laymen might catch a new vision of the work, and, returning to their churches, inspire them to greater achievements. Only the father or mother of a large family can realize the sacrifices involved in his prolonged absences from home. His children were at the age when they needed a father's guiding hand, and he trembled at the thought of placing upon the mother's shoulders so large a share of the responsibility of their rearing. On one of his trips he writes to his wife:

"How I long to be home, but duty seems to point this way, and God can and will keep and bless us in His service."

To a correspondent he writes:

"Thanks for your kind words not only for myself, but my 'dear ones.' How few brethren know of the anxiety that is on my heart for them, as I am kept away from them so much at a time when it seems they need my presence and watch-care, but I try to trust them in the hands of the Lord. Your thought of them touched my heart, and I thank you."

His wife murmured not at the added responsibility, but bravely bore the separation, making every sacrifice that



their children might lack neither training nor attention while he was away working for the Lord, and as she "stayed by the stuff," she encouraged him in his public work.

Dr. Willingham planned his trips with business-like precision. He always kept a strict and accurate account of his expenses. Exceedingly conscientious about the way in which he spent the Lord's money, he maintained a rigid economy, always paying certain items, which traveling men usually charge to their business houses, out of his own pocket. In his early travels he was at times too economical, until he discovered from experience that he could not do his best work unless his physical wants were properly provided for. In making out his itineraries, he sought to reach as many points as possible, and so to arrange his engagements that no time should be wasted on his trips. Thus he was constantly "on the go," making connections on the railroad, and fulfilling engagements to speak before missionary societies, churches, and Conventions. Often the hours on the train were spent in working on his addresses, in writing editorials for the *Journal*, letters and articles for the religious papers. The constant travel, irregular hours, and many addresses proved quite a strain, and he usually returned home weary in body, not to rest, but to find an accumulation of mail on his desk, and duties which could be attended to only by the Secretary. That pile of letters seemed to challenge him, and day after day he would work relentlessly until he could finally triumphantly announce: "There is not a letter left on my desk."

Wherever Dr. Willingham went, the people received him cordially. After hearing him speak, a trucker living near Norfolk remarked that he "took." His straightforward, unaffected manner appealed to the hearts of the people, while his earnestness impressed them with the magnitude of the cause he represented. The following article from the Texas

Standard gives a glimpse of him at the first State Convention attended by him as Corresponding Secretary:

“And our visitors! What Convention ever had a more genial lot of visiting brethren than this one! Brother R. J. Willingham, the new Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, was there, and this was the first State Convention he had visited since his election to that arduous position. More than six feet two in height, with a heart in his bosom as big as a bushel basket, and with a whole-souled geniality that wins all hearts, it is not surprising that Texas Baptists fell in love with him. His speech on Foreign Missions Monday morning was one of the ablest discussions of that problem ever delivered before the Texas Baptist Convention. No one who heard that address can doubt for a moment that the Foreign Mission Board made a most judicious selection, and that the work in Brother Willingham’s hands will go on conquering and to conquer. I hope he will come back again and stay longer next time.”

At the Maryland Convention, held in Baltimore in November, Dr. Willingham made an address on Missions which seemed greatly to impress his hearers. Dr. H. A. Tupper was present upon this occasion; and at the conclusion of the address, sent him the following penciled note:

“Thanks! A noble address, which is obliged to do good. Your presentation of the cause is excellent and eloquent. God bless and guide you in the great work to which you have put your hand and heart. TUPPER.”

Dr. John A. Broadus was also present upon this occasion. Soon afterward, in a letter to Dr. Willingham, he writes:

“Allow me to express the great pleasure with which I heard your addresses here and in Baltimore, and observe your general management of the work. You have a very difficult and delicate task, and one of immense importance, and you seem to me to be thoroughly the right man in the right place. Every blessing upon you and your labors.”

The most important occasion for R. J. Willingham during these initial days was the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, Texas, when he first appeared as Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board before the assembled hosts representing the entire Southern Baptist brotherhood. Southern Baptists received their new Secretary cordially and fraternally, and made him feel that he had the sympathy, love, and co-operation of his brethren. He announced that the policy of the Board was an open and candid one; that the Board wished at all times to carry out the will of the Convention; and that their actions were at all times subject to their closest scrutiny. Concerning this Convention, Dr. Willingham writes:

“Our Convention was one of the best. A fine spirit pervaded all. The Master was with us.”

On Monday morning special consideration was given to Foreign Missions. A debt of \$30,000 hung over the Board. At this time a debt of this size was indeed heavy. It was agreed by all, however, that it was not caused by any wastefulness or unfaithfulness on the part of the Board, and that the particulars of how it came about were far less important than some plan for getting rid of it. A collection was taken for wiping out as much as possible. The results of the collection are told on a postcard written by Dr. Willingham:

“Rejoice with me! \$15,150 raised this morning on the debt. The *Lord blessed* us. We are having a *fine* meeting.”

At the evening session Foreign Missions were again considered; at the close of the meeting another collection was taken. An account of this is given in an extract from a daily paper:

“W. E. Hatcher said: ‘Brother Lofton has almost taken the words out of my mouth, but I got up here to make a speech, and I am going to make it. I want to make a plea

to you for the handsome young Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board. He is thirty-nine tonight, but he will be forty tomorrow, because it is his birthday. I want you to give Willingham a chance. Take this burden off his shoulders. Brethren, you are killing that young man. You will make his heart old and his shoulders bent, and his head gray, if you don't relieve him of this debt. You know a debt is a stone that gathers all the moss in its way as it comes, and here is this one now which represents \$30,000. They raised \$15,195.95 this morning when you were out driving with your rich friends or out shopping in some of the big stores. It's astonishing how many people have business away from the hall when the collection is being taken up. Well, we missed you this morning and are sorry for it; but if you will just come up now with a good round chunk, we will forgive you and you won't lose your place in the church. Give Willingham a chance. Let's start him out even, and then if he gets behind we can abuse him, and I will do it, too. Let's make him a present for his birthday and help the young man along. He is a good boy and deserves a showing. Now, who will join Brother Lofton?"

"J. B. Morris, of Clinton, S. C., came to the front with \$25.

"All at once it became epidemic. Everybody was giving, and those who didn't have the money were giving notes. Over \$2,000 was given.

"The report of the Committee was then adopted and the Convention adjourned by singing the long metre doxology."

At the conclusion of the meeting the happy Secretary writes:

"We have had a glorious Convention. Think of \$17,500 on the debt. The brethren have treated me so kindly. Surely the Lord has been good to me."

## CHAPTER XI.

### UNDER A HEAVY BURDEN.

What an important day in the calendar of the Foreign Mission Rooms was April 30! On that day the fiscal year ended; and, along with the increased activities, there was much excitement over whether or not the books would be closed without debt. On account of the arrangements for taking collections which prevailed in many of the churches, a large proportion of the year's contributions poured in during April, often as much being received on the last day as during the first three months of the Convention year. Anxiously the heavy mail would be opened on the last day and the checks counted. When Dr. Willingham returned home at the dinner hour, he would be greeted with many eager questions in regard to the amount received during the morning, and to the probability of the debt's being wiped out. After a busy afternoon at the office, he would return home at a late hour and expectantly await the result of the telegrams which would arrive between that hour and midnight. How his children enjoyed the excitement! When the bell would ring they would race to the door, each eager to have the honor of reading the telegram aloud to the family; and proud, indeed, was the one who reported the largest contribution. With the enthusiasm of a boy, their father hailed the telegrams. Out of his pocket he would produce a list of figures, and, after rapid calculations, he could tell just how the contributions of a certain state compared with the amount he had estimated it would give, and also with its contributions the previous year. If a state "fell behind," he would regretfully assign some probable cause for its doing so; if one exceeded his expectations, he would be, indeed,

jubilant. Hoping, yet fearing, he would await the final issue. For several years he was doomed to disappointment, as the midnight hour found the Board in debt.

Debt! How R. J. Willingham hated the very word! A phrase used in one of his sermons, "dirt, debt, and the devil," showed his theoretical opinion of financial indebtedness, and the manner in which he managed his personal financial affairs was convincing proof of his abhorrence of it. Even the making of monthly bills he considered very unwise; and, though naturally of a most buoyant disposition, he would invariably become worried at the thought of having his "name on anybody's books."

Utterly opposed to personal debt, he was also extremely anxious that the indebtedness of the Foreign Mission Board should be paid; and for the accomplishment of this he bent every energy. Daily the financial obligations of the Board were increasing; strenuous efforts to reduce expenses and to secure enlarged contributions were necessary. The responsibility of the debt he considered as resting not upon the Board, but upon Southern Baptists. They had ordered that one hundred new missionaries be sent out during Centennial year; only about fifty had been sent; but the salaries of even this number had greatly increased the annual expenses of the Board; and instead of increased gifts, there had been, on account of the panic, a falling off in contributions.

It had been suggested by some that the salaries of the missionaries be reduced. Soon after entering the work, Dr. Willingham wrote to various Boards of other denominations asking for information in regard to the rate of salaries paid their missionaries. He also wrote to the missionaries of his own Board asking for an expression of their opinion in regard to a reduction in salaries. The reply of the missionaries showed a most sacrificing spirit, and in course of time the salaries of those in China and Africa

were reduced. Dr. Willingham believed that missionaries should live economically, but he was never in favor of compelling them to make undue sacrifices. Concerning the salaries of the missionaries, he writes:

“The missionary going out from our churches to foreign lands proposes to give up home and kindred and country, but does not propose to give up his manhood and self-respect; nor does he propose to fail to provide for those of his own household. He goes as our representative to preach Jesus. He gives his time and energies to the work; we stand and promise to provide for him and those dependent upon him.

“A scant provision is never best where we expect good returns. The question should never be, How cheap can a missionary live? but, How much will it take to support him so that he can do most efficient, effective work? . . .

“Is there not a strain of Hardshellism in this idea of grinding down these servants of God until, as they stand in heathen lands, they have added to other trials, that, so trying to a man of honor, distress of spirit because they know not how to provide for those dependent upon them? No, brethren, let us loose their hands. They ought to be provided for. They ought not to feel that they are mendicants, but brethren and sisters, beloved and esteemed by their brethren in the service of the Lord.”

To a correspondent he wires the following in regard to the expenses of the Board:

“The claim is made that it costs so much to send money by the Board. It costs *next to nothing* to send the money, but it does cost to raise it—sending letters, printing, paper, traveling, etc., and I believe our Board is spending less in proportion than any other.”

Seeking to arouse the churches to a sense of their responsibility, he continually emphasized the need of system in the Lord's work, of systematic and proportionate giving. A few extracts from editorials written by him for the Foreign Mission Journal during the first few months of his administration follow:

“In every church some system of regular giving for Missions ought to be adopted. We are convinced that with a little systematic effort almost any of our churches would double, yea quadruple their contributions. The average member needs information; men and places ought to be brought to their attention with the work God is doing.”

“Why should Israel of old give the tenth and we, redeemed through Christ, give often not the hundredth part? Is love less powerful than law to stir us to action? Honor the Lord with ‘the first of the first fruits.’ Remember His love for you, His care over you, and arise to a new sense of your responsibility to Him.”

“The whole trouble begins in procrastination. Right after our Convention, when everyone should go back home fired with zeal for missions, nearly the whole crowd go back to wait for months before doing anything. The expenses go on, and immediately a debt is created from the very first day of the first month, to burden, distress and discourage all the year long. Some say it is a necessity. It is more of a disgrace. Think of it, that for months in the summer, when many spend money for pleasure and recreation, God’s cause is left to languish.”

For several years the debt hung over the Board; fortunately, however, Dr. Willingham did not know that so long a period would elapse before it would be liquidated and was ever hopefully striving to raise enough money to pay it off. Many plans were made for lifting it, into each of which he threw himself with optimism and enthusiasm, working early and late in his endeavors to “push” it. Every effort would be followed by increased contributions, but not enough would be received to liquidate the debt.

Although the various attempts made during these first few years did not succeed in wiping out the debt, they were not in vain; for they did succeed in making it much smaller than it otherwise would have been. Thousands of dollars came in as a result of these special efforts. Missionary enthusiasm was also aroused. Whenever the Secretary spoke on the great subject nearest his heart, there was a marked



increase in contributions. He seemed to know how to touch the purse strings as well as the heart strings of the people. Not only were persons of means aroused to the importance of Foreign Missions, but also those who had little of this world's possessions. After hearing him preach, a factory girl writes:

"Since hearing your earnest sermon on last Sunday (which stirred my very soul within me) I was forced to ask myself the question, 'What am I doing for the salvation of others?' It was my earliest desire, when a child, to be a missionary to foreign fields; but, alas! it seems impossible for me to go; therefore, I will do what little I can here and trust 'tis all for the best. I am one of the many 'factory girls' (a name which has been much abused) of this city; have been for a number of years, and for a good portion of that time have been giving a tenth of what I make. Enclosed you will find \$10, which I have saved up and have been wondering where it would do the most good; and since last Sunday, after hearing your sermon, decided it should go to the foreign field. So will you please see that it goes?

"I remain,

A FACTORY GIRL."

"Who could not give ten cents?" Throughout the South the Secretary sent the appeal that each member of a Baptist Church give that amount. An old lady who had been confined to her bed for several months sent in a much larger contribution. She possessed no money of her own, but had presented the cause to friends calling upon her, and in that manner had collected \$3.65.

Daily the situation was becoming more serious. Stringent measures were necessary lest the fiftieth anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention should be celebrated with a debt of \$50,000. No new missionaries were being sent out. Those who were in this country on furlough were unable to return to their work. Some people were talking of retrenchment. In January, Dr. Willingham was urged by the Board to make a prompt and vigorous canvass in the interest of Foreign Missions. The Secretary was al-

ready burdened with work. To raise \$50,000 before the meeting of the Convention in May would be, indeed, a Herculean task. The proposed canvass would require long absences from both his home and his office. With anxiety pressing upon his heart, he consented to undertake it. In his troubled state of mind he wrote several sentences on a sheet of paper, which he inclosed in an envelope and placed in a private drawer in his desk; in times of perplexity he would sometimes take it out long enough to read, that, at the remembrance of God's guidance in the past, his faith might be strengthened. Although the envelope is marked, "*Strictly Private,*" it will be no desecration for the sympathetic reader to glance at the contents of the enclosed page, at the top of which is written the single word, "Remember":

"What burdens rest on me this morning," he writes. After mentioning the anxiety weighing upon him on account of the indisposition of two members of his family, he continues:

"Over fifty thousand debt on the Board and contributions short. Board wants me to go out and collect. I am weak—times are distressingly hard. Dissatisfaction among *many* churches. Read this morning in my daily readings Exodus 13-14. Looking to God for help."

On the very day on which the above was written, he adds the following postscript to a letter to Dr. Kerfoot, in which he discussed the debt:

"Nothing like *Trusting* and *Trying*. I would rather live trying than to be dying in despair."

Strenuously the campaign was pushed. From Maryland to Texas the Secretary traveled, visiting the largest cities, seeking to raise enough money to pay off the heavy debt. During the first two weeks of the campaign he averaged more than a thousand dollars a day.

It will be impossible to follow him during these busy days, as untiringly and unremittingly he labors—now on a long trip; now in his office attacking the work which has accumulated during his absence. A picture of him at this time—perhaps some would call it a *motion picture*—can be seen by reading a few extracts from his letters and post-cards:

“We had our meeting here last night; there were only eight present, but I said my say and I think made a start. This has been hard to do. I do not know why they are so utterly indifferent here to the work, or many of them—not all. Fifty or sixty were invited out last night. We had a good little meeting, however. I preach on missions at Second Church tomorrow morning.”

“One thousand from First Church in Macon. Good! Long Metre Doxology. More from other churches. I had a good time. Now for Atlanta.”

“I preached in Second Church in morning, Fifth in afternoon, and Third at night. Got some money, but not enough. Still at it. Hope to get more today and leave at four this evening for Memphis. From there I expect to go to Little Rock and Fort Worth, etc. This will be my long, hard trip, but I keep well and cheerful and hope to look back on all of it with joy.”

“Soon this morning I awoke here to find train delayed and have waited four hours, and do not know when I will get away. ‘They say’ one o’clock—some say two. What do you suppose I have been doing? Stop and guess before you read further.

“Well, I will tell you. I got up, dressed, took breakfast, sent a telegram to a meeting of pastors in San Antonio, and then called on pastor here; got some names of well-to-do members, and started out to get subscriptions *on the Foreign Mission Board debt*. Soon in the morning these people were hearing of what you have heard something, and I got some money, too. I just thought anywhere in Southern Baptist Convention territory I am *at home* for the present. I really enjoyed the rounds much better than sitting up here in the cars, *until I commenced to write to you*.

"I stopped in Waco yesterday—think I got in some good work there.

"I expected to be in San Antonio today, go to Austin tonight, then to Houston and Galveston tonight. Now, I may have to drop Austin or Houston out of my program. From Atlanta I expect to go directly home, getting there Tuesday morning. . . .

"My health is good, though I was *very* tired Sunday night. Maybe the Lord is resting me today some as I wait.

"Well, I have a great work before me, and it is the Lord's work. He wants this world, and He honors us to make us, so unworthy, co-workers with Him."

"I got into Houston last night after dark, in time for prayer meeting; made a talk and got some money. Left there before day this morning, and am now at these folks' door. I talked to the business men at one o'clock. Tomorrow morning at 3:45 leave for New Orleans and Atlanta, getting to the latter place (D. V.) about 12:00 Saturday. I have some special work to do there on Saturday. — — has promised me a contribution."

"To give you an idea of how busy I am: I spoke five times yesterday and got up at 3:00 this morning and came home, and have a world of work before me."

"How I wish I could see you all tonight. But if we can only meet the debt and pay it all, I am willing to go through all of this."

As a result of the canvass, thousands of dollars poured into the treasury of the Board; and, instead of a debt of \$50,000, the Secretary was able to report at the Jubilee Convention an indebtedness of less than \$20,000, which was \$10,000 less than that reported the previous year.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DIVERSIFIED DUTIES.

Dr. Willingham was an intense worker. He had the happy faculty of accomplishing things. When he undertook a task, he did so with the determination to push it through to completion as quickly as possible. He counted no effort too great, nor could he rest until he could say, "That much is done." Not only did he himself toil unremittingly, but he knew how to inspire those engaged in the office to put their best efforts into the work. An early hour found him at his desk in the morning, and a late hour usually drove him home to the evening meal.

After months of constant strain, Dr. Willingham recognized the fact that it was impossible for one man to accomplish the many duties which devolved upon him; and, in his first report to the Southern Baptist Convention, he emphasized this fact. The Convention did not elect an Assistant Secretary, but left the matter in the hands of the Board, who, on account of the prevailing "hard times," decided temporarily to utilize the services of Rev. R. E. Chambers, who had been appointed as missionary to China, but had not been sent on account of the scarcity of funds.

Mr. Chambers entered the services of the Board September 1, 1894, and for eight months worked faithfully and efficiently. Dr. Willingham had the highest regard for the young man; it was his pleasant duty before Mr. Chambers left for China to pronounce the words which made him and Miss Mattie Hall, a member of the Second Church, Richmond, husband and wife.

At the next Convention, the fact that one man could not accomplish the work was again stressed, and the need of another Secretary was emphasized. During the months

that followed, the Board undertook to find the man best suited for the work. After prayerful consideration, Dr. E. Y. Mullins, pastor of Lee Street Baptist Church, Baltimore, was called to be Associate Secretary.

Dr. Mullins entered upon his new duties September 1, 1895. A man of piety, culture, and unusual intellectual gifts, he was also an ardent lover of Missions. With enthusiasm he threw himself into the work; and his administration, though not of long duration, was fruitful of good results. Dr. Willingham admired the ability of his co-worker, and the relations between the two secretaries was at all times harmonious. The friendship formed at this time was lifelong. Feeling constrained to accept a call extended him by the influential church in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, Dr. Mullins, in March, 1896, left the services of the Board to re-enter the pastorate.

During the following summer, Dr. A. J. Barton, pastor of the North Edgefield Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, was called to be Assistant Secretary. On August 20, he entered upon his new duties. Dr. Barton was a most forceful speaker, and, as he traveled through the South, he impressed upon thousands the importance of Foreign Missions. He also did an excellent work with his pen in bringing the cause before the people. The years of his secretaryship were important ones in the history of the Board, as it was during this time that the final successful efforts were made to pay off the indebtedness, an account of which will be given in a subsequent chapter.

There were other matters besides the debt to burden the secretary during these early years—matters which taxed his ingenuity and challenged his tact. The "Gospel Mission" trouble which had been agitating the peace for several years had not blown over; and at times sounds of discord would be heard in far-away China or in sections of this country where there were those who sympathized with the

movement. Soon after he became secretary, the "Gospel Missioners" withdrew from the field occupied by missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention and opened a mission further inland. This was the beginning of the end of the long struggle; several years passed, however, before all elements of discord were finally removed. Gradually the movement ceased to conflict with the work of the Foreign Mission Board; and, in course of time, several of the missionaries of the "Gospel Mission" returned into the services of the Foreign Mission Board. Dr. Willingham believed that, in spite of differences of opinion in regard to the manner in which the Lord's work should be conducted, peace and harmony should exist between Christians; and, in his dealings with the "Gospel Missioners" and their sympathizers, although he firmly upheld the policies of the Southern Baptist Convention, he did so in a kindly and fraternal manner. His letters to those missionaries who left the services of the Board during his secretaryship to join the "Gospel Mission" showed a most kindly spirit. While Mr. Chambers was working in the office, he once wrote to a correspondent, during Dr. Willingham's absence from the city, the following:

"As to the Gospel Mission, I know that Dr. Willingham has the kindest feelings toward all the brethren and sisters connected with it. While he does not agree with them as to the principles on which the mission is run, I have never heard him say an unkind word about any of the workers."

At the close of the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, Texas, in 1894, a merry party of fifty-six boarded an excursion train bound for Mexico. Dr. Willingham was one of this party. He was making this trip with the approval of the Board in order that he might give his personal attention to the work in that country. Two tickets had been kindly offered him by two men interested in missions, one of which he had gratefully accepted. An

air of cheerfulness and good humor pervaded the party. Dr. Willingham not only derived much pleasure from the delightful companionship of his fellow-travelers, but he in turn contributed a great deal to the enjoyment of the crowd. He was an ideal traveling companion; wide-awake, genial, and jolly, he could usually see all there was to be seen and show it in a most interesting manner to those who happened to be with him. His love of teasing would usually show itself on such an occasion; on this trip, he recognized one or two romances which later culminated very happily. Among others in the party were Dr. T. T. Eaton, Mr. G. B. Buell, Miss M. E. Wright, and the two Misses McIntosh, one of whom afterwards became Mrs. G. B. Buell, and the other, Mrs. T. P. Bell.

It would be pleasant to sit by the Secretary and view the unfamiliar scenery and the strange sights of the country—to see the prairie dogs, the thousands of acres of cactus, the desolate regions so familiar to those around the Dead Sea in Palestine, the lower country, so like Egypt in many respects. It would be interesting to dine in the Chinese eating-houses; to pass through the country where it is said not to have rained in seven years; hastily to pull down windows at the approach of a windstorm laden with sand and dust. It would be less pleasant, perhaps, to arrive at a hotel in a strange city after midnight; to find a waiter who not only cannot speak English, but cannot understand it, much to the wonderment of some of the party, who, although they cannot understand him, cannot perceive why he cannot understand them—they speak very plainly and certainly loud enough; to see conspicuous advertisements of the Sunday bull fight, and the sale of lottery tickets on the Sabbath; to witness on all sides the evidence of wickedness and the degradation of the religious leaders of the people. It would be profitable to meet with him face to face the missionaries whom he has known through correspond-



ence during the several months of his Secretaryship; to become initiated into their work—to visit their schools, Sunday schools, and churches; to meet the native converts; to learn of the difficulties which beset the workers; and to rejoice in their successes.

For the benefit of those who were not able to visit Mexico, the secretary published in the *Foreign Mission Journal* a long, interesting account of his trip. The physical features of the country and the spiritual atmosphere were described, and an interesting account of each missionary and his work was given.

During the autumn of the next year, Dr. Willingham found himself again in Mexico. The missionaries needed his counsel on several important matters, and had urged that he attend the meeting of the Missionary Convention of Mexico in Saltillo. As he was to visit the Texas State Convention, which was to be held soon after the time of this meeting, the Board had decided that it would be expedient for him to comply with the request. Several traveling companions made the trip from Virginia to Mexico, which otherwise would have been very tedious, a most pleasant and enjoyable one. All who attended the Convention were entertained in Madero Institute. To be in the house with eighteen missionaries for several days was an experience that Dr. Willingham enjoyed immensely; he was very glad to become better acquainted with them socially as well as officially. Reports were read at the three daily sessions of the Convention and important subjects were discussed, such as the training of churches to be self-supporting, and the holding of church property. The latter was a very difficult question in Mexico; and, as according to the law in force there were several difficulties in regard to titles of property of the Foreign Mission Board, it was arranged for Dr. Willingham to have a conference with President Diaz.

He would sometimes give an account of this conference

in his sermons. He would tell of the difficulty of obtaining the interview. Vividly he would picture himself and companions dressed in their best clothes, being driven to the palace; also the presentation of the cards which must be viewed by the guard before they were allowed to enter; and the wait in the elegantly-appointed reception room until the proper official could with pomp and ceremony usher them into the presence of the President. In striking contrast to the audience of an earthly ruler, he would portray the ease with which even the humblest soul can at all times, under any circumstances, without delay approach the Heavenly Father, the Ruler of the universe.

In an account of this visit to Mexico, Dr. Willingham writes:

“Time would fail to tell of all the joys of this trip—the love and kindness of the brethren and sisters. But let the people at home know that they have men and women in Mexico for whom they ought to thank God and with renewed zeal press forward in His service.”

Within two years Dr. Willingham was destined to go again to Mexico—this time on business of a more serious nature. Internal discord had broken out among the missionaries, which the Board had tried in vain to settle through correspondence. Finally, it became evident that someone must be sent to the Mission in the interest of peace. Dr. Willingham refused to assume the entire responsibility of attempting to arbitrate in so serious a misunderstanding; and, at the request of the Board, Mr. William Ellyson, a member of the Mexican Committee, accompanied him. The two were to act as a special committee for the Board. Arriving in Mexico, they visited each station and conferred individually with the workers. A day of prayer was set apart, and a meeting of all the missionaries was called. This meeting was a very tender one; and apparently harmony was restored between brethren who had been estranged. Before many months had elapsed, however, the old

flame had again broken out; and, in the course of time, several of the missionaries severed their relations with the Board. It was with regret that the Board accepted the resignation of men who had for years been doing faithful work. As a result of this trouble, the mission stations were left in a crippled condition, and it became necessary for new missionaries to be sent out and for rearrangements to be made. Between the meetings of Texas and Missouri Conventions, in the fall of 1898, Dr. Willingham made a trip to Mexico to confer with the missionaries in regard to the new conditions. The visit was necessarily short, still it proved most satisfactory, and the outlook in the Mission became much more hopeful.

In 1895 the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution authorizing the consolidation of the *Foreign Mission Journal* and the *Home Field*, the organ of the Home Mission Board. In the report of the Foreign Mission Board, Dr. Willingham had announced that the circulation of the *Journal* was excellent, and financially the magazine was successful, not only paying its expenses, but adding to the income of the Board. The majority of those who attended the Convention, however, were of the opinion that decided advantages would accrue if the two magazines were combined, and a committee was authorized to make arrangements for the consolidation. In October, the *Mission Journal* of the Southern Baptist Convention appeared. Every effort was put forth to make the new magazine a success, but the arrangement proved unsatisfactory and the subscription list decreased until it included only about half as many names as had formerly been enrolled on the list of the *Foreign Mission Journal* alone. The next Convention gave orders that each Board should publish its own literature, and in June (1896) the *Foreign Mission Journal* again appeared with its original mailing list, its popularity being proved by the rapid and great increase in its circulation.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LIFE IN RICHMOND.

Richmond is a beautiful city, and with its many historical associations—not only of the Confederacy, but also of the early days of the nation—its many educational institutions, its general air of culture, and the noted church-going proclivities of its inhabitants, it makes an excellent home for the boy or girl who is just at the age to drink in knowledge and to form impressions of life. Soon after reaching Richmond, three of the little Willinghams were drinking of the Pierian Spring at one of the public schools; the eldest daughter was attending the Virginia Female Institute, and the second son Richmond College. The eldest son was spending a year at work before completing his education. The first summer in the new home was clouded by the illness of the second son, a boy of fifteen, who suffered from a severe case of typhoid fever. There were critical days of anxious waiting, but he was finally restored to health.

Richmond is more compactly built than cities located farther South. After the large porches and yards of their former residences, the home—though a corner house—seemed cramped quarters to the Willinghams. It was a source of worry to Mrs. Willingham that her little ones were compelled to play on the street, and she once remarked that she could not “spank the children without all the neighbors knowing it.” All agreed that at the expiration of the year’s lease, a new home must be secured. To find a suitable house with the desired yard at the average rent was a difficult task; but, at length, an attractive old home, which met all the requirements, Number 15 South Fifth Street, was found. The house had been built about fifty years

before this time by a wealthy bachelor, Mr. Barrett. Years later it had been the home of the French Consul. Since that time it had changed hands several times. In October, 1894, the Willinghams moved in. What a delightful home it proved! How Dr. Willingham enjoyed this home! Here at the end of a weary summer's day the father could find peace and quiet, and a refreshing breeze from the James River not very far away. Here he could entertain innumerable friends and missionaries, for room could always be made for his guests. And how the children enjoyed that house, those back porches and that yard, with its terraces and magnolia trees! Surely it was an ideal home for a large family.

People who live in rented houses are at times liable to certain inconveniences which do not trouble those who own their homes. In the fall of 1895, just as Dr. Willingham was preparing to make a trip into Mexico (mentioned in the preceding chapter), his wife was beset with persons who desired to be shown through the house, as they were contemplating purchasing it. Exceedingly busy and weighted with cares, he could but be disturbed at the thought of the probability of his home being sold while he was in a far-away country. Visions of house-hunting and of the ordeal of moving were not pleasant; no other place would be so suitable. With anxiety resting upon him, he left for Mexico. The only way to end the uncertainty was to buy the house. Before reaching Mexico, he wrote home that he had been able to make financial arrangements which would enable him to purchase the house, and upon his return to Richmond, he paid for it in cash.

On February 25, 1896, a day long to be remembered in Richmond, the Willinghams' possession of the house was again threatened—this time by fire. A spark from the conflagration which laid in ruins Grace Street Baptist Church was borne by the high winds fully half a mile until it fell

on the roof of 15 South Fifth Street. Soon there was all the commotion which attends a fire—smoke was pouring, fire engines were noisily puffing; water was streaming; men were rushing back and forth through the house; the usual crowd was momentarily increasing. Dr. Willingham, accompanied by two of his daughters, had gone to witness the fire that was devouring the church of which his beloved friend, Dr. Hatcher, was pastor. As he stood in the great throng intently watching the devastating work of the flames, hearing the frequent ringing of bells announcing fires which had been caused by flying sparks, he little dreamed that his own home was in danger. Arriving there later, he found an engine in front of the house and a large hole in the roof; the fire, however, had been extinguished. The damages were not great; but as a result of the blaze, a tin roof replaced the shingle one; and thus was relieved the anxiety which formerly prevailed when the bells announced a near-by fire.

One of the chief attractions of the new home was its proximity to the Second Baptist Church, into whose membership he had been received soon after moving to Richmond. At diagonal corners of the city square, bounded by Fifth and Sixth Streets, and Main and Cary, the church and his home were separated by one residence and a large vacant lot. Nothing could have pleased him more than to live so near the church, and it was a great delight to him to see a large delegation from his family present *on time* at the various services. Dr. W. W. Landrum was pastor of the Second Church; it was a joy to Dr. Willingham to renew the friendship which had existed for many years between himself and this gifted and charming man, and to sit under his ministry. The people of the Second Church won his love and admiration; and they in turn proved devoted friends to him. And what a loyal member he was! How he enjoyed the various services of the church—Sunday

School, prayer-meeting, and the Sunday services! How his baritone voice rang out in the old hymns! What fervent petitions and expressions of thanksgiving he uttered when so often he was called on to pray! Frequently was he asked to preach and to conduct the mid-week prayer meeting, and most graciously did he comply. The daughter of a later pastor once remarked to her mother, after hearing Dr. Willingham preach: "Dr. Willingham is the most interesting preacher I ever heard, except Father!" One of Dr. Willingham's daughters can never forget the impression made upon her when, as a little girl, she would sit in the Second Church and hear him preach. Her heart in her mouth at times, she would hope that everyone was enjoying the sermon as much as she. She would feel sure that everyone would have to give a great deal after hearing that sermon—she believed that even the college boys in the gallery just couldn't help giving something. As she would pass down the aisle at the conclusion of the service she would hear many remarks in regard to the sermon and her father's wonderful ability to influence people to give. As she grew older and would attempt to explain to herself why her father's sermons were so forceful, she would reason that his eloquence consisted not in glittering sentences, not in attempted flights of oratory, but in the *earnestness* with which he presented the truth that was burning in his heart. Perhaps the cause of his power in preaching can more clearly be seen in the following extract from one of his addresses:

"As I grow older, I try more to recognize as I stand up to speak that my Master is present. . . . As I was preparing to preach I received one day a letter from my old professor, in which he said: 'Remember, my boy, that the common people heard the Master gladly.' Then, when I would write poetry and philosophy and weave in my science, I would take the paper and throw it under the table, saying, 'I do not believe the common people would enjoy that.' Then

I would try to make my expressions plain. When mothers and fathers would say, 'My little boy said he enjoyed your sermon today,' they did not know how much I appreciated it. Nobody knows how hard it was for me to get over the things I had learned. When my struggle would be hardest, I would get on my knees and say to God, 'O God, take me and speak through me.' And as I go around today I realize more and more that in this great world of the Master we can do nothing except as God's Spirit works."

Whatever the source of his power, as he preached on Foreign Missions, his hearers were taken out of themselves as they gazed on a *lost world* and realized, as never before, that upon them individually rested the responsibility of telling that world of a Savior.

Equally forceful were his sermons on subjects other than missions. Among the ones which he most liked to preach were those on the following subjects: "Personal Consecration," "Family Religion," "Christian Hope," "The Christian Soldier," "Patience," "A Purpose in the Heart," "Burdens and What to Do With Them," "A Strong Man Discouraged," "Looking Unto Jesus," "The Seven Last Sayings on the Cross"; also those from the following texts: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve"; "Come unto me"; "And they stood every man in his place round about the camp"; "Give me thine heart"; "Whose I am and whom I serve."

Comparatively few Sundays found Dr. Willingham in his own church. Frequently he was in other cities preaching on Foreign Missions, and when in Richmond his services were much in demand—there were many requests from the various churches for him to preach the sermon preceding the annual collection; then, also, any pastor who was sick or who wished to leave the city knew to whom to turn for this supply. At times his family would remonstrate with him for preaching so often on Sunday, insisting that after a busy week in the office he needed rest on the Sab-



bath. He would continue to accept the many invitations, however, saying that the Lord had called him to preach, and that if he could not do so, he would be compelled to leave the Secretaryship and re-enter the pastorate. Several of the churches would compensate him for supplying their pulpits; he would accept the money, but would refuse to use a cent of it for himself or family, insisting that whatever he earned on the Sabbath belonged to the Lord. He was popular not only with Baptists, but with other denominations. Believing in Christ's command to "preach the gospel to every creature," he could see no impropriety in preaching to Christians of other faiths and orders, and gladly did he accept their invitations to supply their pulpits. The Lutherans and Presbyterians often called upon him.

The members of Grace Street Presbyterian Church were especially devoted to him. One Sunday in the summer of 1896, he had an engagement to preach in this church. The week preceding had been an especially trying one. His eldest son was recovering from a long and severe case of fever, and he, although extremely busy in the daytime, had insisted on spending the nights in the invalid's room. The long strain had broken him down, and when Sunday arrived, he was weak and ill. His wife urged him not to attempt to preach, but, as usual, he could not be dissuaded from work. Mrs. Willingham called her son, Ben, and asked him to accompany his father to the Presbyterian Church. The day was excessively warm. The Doxology had been sung and Dr. Willingham was pronouncing the Invocation when his voice stopped—two elders, noticing the pause, looked up to see him leaning unconscious on the pulpit stand. Quickly springing up the steps, they were at his side by the time the congregation became aware that something unusual had occurred. He was assisted into the pastor's study, and the congregation was dismissed. The attack of vertigo soon

passed off, and later he was able to return home in a carriage. Compelled now to give up, he unwillingly consented, after much persuasion, to go to a watering-place to recuperate. Weak and miserable, yet still possessing his characteristic love of teasing, he wrote home the following letter, in which the reader can see just how much he enjoyed vacations and watering-places:

“Well, I am here at this monotonous, hum-drum, do-nothing, loafing place. If it does not kill, it ought to cure, for there ought to be some recompense for staying here. If I were well, I would charge at least \$100 or \$200 to stay here a week.

“Card playing, dancing, poor music, ordinary eating, and foolish talking serve to wear away the time for most of the folk. I am too weak to walk much, too indifferent to talk much, too sick to eat much. Corneille stays with me most of the time, and I enjoy that vestige of home life and good civilization. She seems cheerful, but how she does after a two weeks’ spell is the question. I believe, however, she said yesterday evening that she had felt better yesterday than since coming.

“It seems to me this ‘pill’ ought certainly to make me careful for my health in the future. I drink freely of the water, for I have nothing else to do to break the monotony. I hope it will help me—cannot tell yet. Nobody is here that you care a straw for or care to hear about, so I will not inflict on you useless waste of time, as I suppose you are busy if I am not. . . .

“My chief pleasure here is going around and looking at the old houses, rocks, etc., and thinking of thirty years and the changes. Much here, however, will be about the same, I reckon, thirty years if not three hundred years from now.

“Well, goodbye. You may think from this letter that I am blue. No, not ‘specially so—just tired of doing nothing, which I despise but must do for a while.”

On the next day he concluded a letter to his son, Ben, with the following words:

“Take good care of your mother, and remember all through life that home is a good place for a sick man, if it’s a good home.”

In striking contrast to these words penned during his enforced rest is a card written by him later while busy at his post, which is as follows:

“Grand meeting. Feeling fine. *Very* busy. Love.

“R. J. W.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE DEBT LIFTED.

"If brethren throughout the South could see our big-hearted secretary as we see him—praying, struggling, working incessantly, hoping that God will enlarge the hearts of His people and unloose their purse strings so that they may send in the needed money—they would understand the situation far more clearly than we can present it."

The above words, which appeared in the Religious Herald, April 9, 1896, were written by Dr. R. H. Pitt, who for many years had been a member of the Board, and, during Dr. Willingham's term of office, had proved one of his warmest friends and most trusted advisors. Often would the Secretary run up to his office in times of perplexity to ask his advice in regard to the important questions confronting him. Grave, indeed, had the situation become at this time. The heart of the Secretary ached as he faced the probability of having to retain in this country missionaries on furlough—and even the possibility of having to recall others.

The Southern Baptist Convention that year urged the Board to induce as many churches as possible to send in their contributions during the first quarter of the Convention year and thus relieve them of the necessity of struggling through eleven months of the Convention year with funds entirely inadequate to carry on the work, thus being compelled to pay large sums in interest which should go directly to the foreign field. How often during the following years has similar action been taken by the Convention! How much money could have been saved during all these years had the churches carried out the suggested plan! How many more heathen could have heard the gos-

pel! How many more years of service might have been given by him upon whose heart the needs of the work pressed so heavily, had he been spared the heart-ache and anxiety which the old method involved! Many years have passed; many of the churches have changed their policy in regard to collections, but in the majority of them the old method prevails. The money slowly comes into the treasury during the greater part of the year; thousands of dollars which should be paying the salaries of additional missionaries are spent for interest; and care and anxiety add premature age to those into whose hands the management of the work has been intrusted.

Detailed accounts cannot be given of the efforts put forth by Dr. Willingham during these years to liquidate the debt—of his endeavors to arouse each pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention by special letters, postcards, and Journals; of his various plans for raising additional money; of the calls to prayer; of the prayer-meetings held in the Foreign Mission room; of his impassioned appeals before churches, associations and conventions. With the vision of the world lying in wickedness and darkness so constantly before him, with men and women pleading to be sent to the foreign fields, his very soul cried out against the debt which prevented Southern Baptists from grasping their wonderful opportunities.

Finally the break came. As the Secretary spoke before the Georgia Baptist Convention in April, 1897, he dwelt upon the marvelous manner in which God had opened doors in heathen lands and pleaded for funds with which to send missionaries back to their work—men and women longing to be sent to the front. Suddenly he was interrupted by Dr. J. L. Gross, who arose to make a resolution to the effect that during the month which remained before the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, Georgia Baptists should raise \$5,000 each for the Home and Foreign Boards.

The motion was adopted by a rising vote. This was, indeed, a great moment in the history of Georgia Baptists. Missionary enthusiasm ran high and the Holy spirit was present in power. This action of the Georgia Convention was telegraphed to each Baptist paper in the South, and similar action was urged in each state.

Although Georgia Baptists paid their additional pledge and other states increased their contributions, when Southern Baptists arrived in Wilmington for the Southern Baptist Convention the next month, a debt of \$13,500 hung over the Foreign Mission Board. Before the Convention convened the delegates from Georgia held a called meeting and decided that as one last effort to lift the debt they would raise an additional \$1,300 (\$300 of which was for "flood-swept Louisiana and frost-bitten Florida"). When this action was announced by Dr. Gibson in the Convention, it was greeted with enthusiasm. Dr. W. E. Hatcher arose to pledge for Virginia, declaring that this was a Convention in which there was but one person opposed to the Foreign Mission Board—that person was the devil embodied in the debt, and that the Convention proposed to wrestle with that person and throw him out of the way. Each state held a called meeting and pledges were made for more than enough to wipe out the indebtedness, the pledges to be paid in thirty days.

"It was a fight to the finish," writes the Christian Index. "We dared not give the battle over. The King of glory was on our side, and with supreme confidence in our leader and perennial love in our hearts for our lost brethren across the sea, we said, 'With His help we conquer.'" \* \* \* That was the "red letter" Convention of all the Southern Baptist Conventions, and that was the "red letter" day of the Convention at Wilmington.

There was great rejoicing among Southern Baptists. At the end of thirty days, however, Georgia was the only state

which had paid her pledge in full. Finally, at the end of three months, all pledges had been paid, but very little had been received for the current expenses during those three months, for each of which the sum of \$9,000 was needed. People were speaking of "no debt," whereas they were allowing the Board to sink deeper and deeper into debt each day. The real test would be the closing of the books at the end of the fiscal year. In the meantime strenuous efforts must be put forth if victory was to be won.

As Dr. Willingham spoke before the Convention, there was one incident which he told with marked effect. His little son, Holcombe, the little boy born during Centennial year, while repeating Scripture verses to his mother one day, had thus rendered the Great Commission: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every *preacher*." The ministers would laugh heartily at this joke upon themselves, but the lesson struck home as the Secretary emphasized the need of some preachers learning the Gospel of Missions.

As he spoke before the South Carolina Convention in 1897, he was interrupted by someone, who asked: "Tell us about the little boy and the preachers." Dr. Willingham stopped, his great form shaking with emotion; unable to speak, he could only indicate by his hand that he could not comply with the request and then resume his speech—the little one had been called Home.

Upon returning from a long trip one Saturday morning in October, he had found the little boy in bed with a disease that later proved to be scarlet fever. How he clung to that little boy! How anxiously he watched by his bedside. How untiringly he climbed the Main Street hill in the middle of each morning to look in at the little patient! How fervently he prayed for his recovery, always, however, adding the words, "If consistent with Thy holy will!" When the little one was taken, he bowed in submission to the

Divine Will, but the sorrow of separation cut deep into his heart, and often would his eyes fill with tears when he talked of his "little missionary." On the last day of the year he writes to his wife:

"Had you thought of it that twenty years ago today we gave up our former life and little home and put ourselves before the Lord for His service in a special manner? Surely the Lord has been good to us. We have had many joys and blessings. The heaviest sorrow is that which has come this year. Yet, how merciful God has been in sparing us all these years. We loved our boy, we love him yet. We know he is safe. We will have no more anxiety about him—only joy in anticipation of meeting him. I know that God makes no mistakes—our plans were not in accordance with His will. Perhaps, *because of our gift*, He has done better for us and the boy than we planned. I trust and wait. God help us to be faithful with those who remain to us."

Sorrows often come in quick succession. Only a few months had elapsed since he stood by the open grave of his little son, when a telegram announced the death of his father. His end had come suddenly; but, though he had been in good health, he had for months been looking forward to his death. How the son would miss his father—the joy of the visits to his home in Macon; his prayers for him; his regular letters, always brief, but full of news, sagacious advice, and words indicating his interest in the work and pride in his preacher son; the visits which he paid every year or two to his home in Richmond, when his warm heart, genial and sunny nature, and animated and enthusiastic spirits made the days speed by not only for the son, but for the grandchildren, to whom these visits were always great occasions. "He was one of God's noblemen—" the bereaved son writes; "a grand and good man"; and often in the loneliness which his death caused during the years that followed, he would exclaim, "Father was a wonderful man."



Although his heart was aching, the Secretary worked untiringly and effectively. These were critical days for the cause of Foreign Missions. Should the books close with a debt after the great enthusiasm and special efforts of the people, the effect would be depressing. Every effort must be put forth to raise the necessary money. By tongue and by pen he sought to arouse the people to greater liberality. No plan was too simple if it would appeal to the hearts of the people. Through the Foreign Mission Journal he asked the people to give their incomes for one day to the great cause—the rich banker was urged to put in his tens or hundreds of dollars and the little boy his dimes; the rich woman to give of her wealth; and the poor, toiling girl, of her small store. A young woman sent in her salary for a month, declaring that never before had teaching seemed so sweet. About fifteen men in one church promised their pastor to adopt this plan, one of them a merchant, agreeing to announce the day on which he proposed to give his income that the church members might purchase on that day and thus help the cause. As the year drew to a close, he suggested that each reader of the Journal send in one dollar extra; he also appointed a special day, April 4, on which people should give their income for that day. One man who wished to “make April 4 a great day” decided also to “cut every edge” that the contribution might be as large as possible. His letter contained the following itemized account: “Hired out with team to plow, \$2; eggs, 15 cents; milk, 35 cents; did without three meals, 50 cents. Total, \$3.”

One thousand dollars was offered by a man of means on the condition that \$10,000 additional be raised. The Secretary was soon raising money on this proposition. Only a month remained. As a last effort he began a movement to get one thousand preachers to either give or raise \$10 each, in addition to the regular contributions. Before leaving

Richmond he presented this proposition before the Pastors' Conference and immediately ten ministers responded.

At the Georgia Convention one hundred and twenty-six pledges were made.

The various efforts were not futile. From the rich and the poor the money came in, and the end of the year found not only the debt paid, but a balance in the treasury.

The Convention in Norfolk in 1898 was one of thanksgiving. On a postcard the happy Secretary writes:

"Big crowd. People *rejoicing* over no debt. Hope all well. I am feeling *thankful* and *well*."

A great burden had been rolled from his strong shoulders. With gratitude in his heart and with renewed zeal for the cause, he entered upon the new era which had dawned upon the work of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions.



ROBERT J. WILLINGHAM



## CHAPTER XV.

### A NEW ERA.

“Stop hitting the table, brother, the Lord’s running this meeting.” Thus cried Dr. Lansing Burrows as ex-Governor Northern rapped in vain for order. It was at the Georgia Baptist Convention, which met in Savannah, in April, 1899. Dr. Willingham had just delivered a soul-stirring appeal for Foreign Missions, at the conclusion of which the people, profoundly moved, could not refrain from giving vent to their enthusiasm. The Christian Index gives the following account of this Pentecostal meeting:

“Dr. Willingham, the big-bodied, but bigger-souled, Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, followed Mr. Gross. He is a magnetic man, and it always seems as if the power of God is on him when he arises to speak for Foreign Missions. He spoke rapidly, heartily, as a man who believed with all his heart what he was saying. He began by a personal reference, saying that all of his people had been Baptists, one of them being a deacon in the Savannah church when Dr. Holcombe was pastor. After a few remarks on this line, Dr. Willingham launched forth into his subject, declaring that ‘a church of the living God is not a sleeping car service to heaven.’ The church is a life-saving service, with all its perils and hardships. God calls on every member of the service to throw out the life line. There is somebody you can save.

“Then he told about what had been done; told of the fruit mission work was bearing. He marshaled before the listening brethren the 80,000 converts from the darkness of China, he marched forth the 40,000 from Japan, and pointed to the thousands who were coming from the night of Africa’s barbarism into the light of the gospel’s glorious day. He praised God to think that South China showed 295 baptisms and over 100 had been buried with Christ at the

North China Mission. China, who but a few years ago spat upon our missionaries in the streets and spurned them as Christian dogs, is now holding forth her hands and calling for men and women to come and teach them the blessed gospel of the Son of God.

"The same thing was true of Brazil and other countries, and oh! if the churches would only awake to see the condition of things.

"Dr. Willingham said some plain and telling things to the churches.

"If Jesus was to come into our churches today. He would not notice the congregation or the music,' said he, 'but he would look the pastor and deacons in the eyes and say, "Are you doing My work? Are you sending the gospel to lost and dying men"?"

"In America, when the missionary movement began, hardly one person in fourteen was a member of a Christian church. To-day one in every three is a member of an evangelical church, and one in every fourteen is a Baptist.

"The Baptist denomination divided not many years ago, about half going one way and half the other, one-half declaring against missions and the other half declaring in favor of sending the gospel to all the world. To-day those who declared for missions have grown to be millions, while those who opposed missions have dwindled and dwindled until they hardly have a name.

"With marvelous power, for the Spirit of God seemed to be upon him, Dr. Willingham showed the need of more workers in the foreign field. Five married men are needed, and the men are ready to go, but the Board has no money to send them. He told of Dr. Hartwell, who had spent his life in China. He had recently returned home, after a visit to this country, and had gone pleading for a young man to be sent to him, so that he could train him up in the work before he was called away.

"At the conclusion of the address, parliamentary practice was thrown to the winds and God's Spirit moved among the delegates. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene. Someone started to sing, 'Stand Up for Jesus,' and instantly the whole congregation stood up and began to sing, and then, as if by common consent, they all pressed forward and began to shake hands with Dr. Willingham. There were hugs

and hand-shakes, and tears, and hearty 'God bless you's,' and then everybody shook hands with everybody else, and other songs were sung. When quiet was restored, the practical side of the meeting came forward.

"President Northern rapped for order again and again, but Dr. Burrows said, 'Stop hitting the table, brother; the Lord's running this meeting.' He then proceeded to say that he wanted to do more for Foreign Missions than he had ever done before. He knew he was going to have a mighty wrestle with the devil, but he was going to double his subscription. Then Dr. Smith, of Columbus, said he had one hundred members who would give a dollar a month. Rev. Jos. Gross pledged himself to raise \$1,000, and Dr. White, of Macon, said his church would give \$500 above the regular offering.

"Rev. A. M. Bennett, of Greensboro, said he had a poor church, but he'd raise \$150.

"'Don't do that,' said Dr. Burrows. 'Make it \$100. That's enough for you.'

"'Let him alone,' said Dr. Willingham. 'If he doesn't raise it, I'll make good the shortage.'

"Dr. Ragsdale was called on to pray that God would raise up more workers from Georgia. He offered a fervent prayer to God.

"Dr. J. G. Gibson, weak and tremulous as he is, arose, with tears shining in his eyes, and said he had already subscribed, but he wanted to pledge himself to give another \$150—\$50 to each of the Boards. A brother went over to him and told him he should not give all he had, and put fifty dollars in his hand.

"Then Dr. Broughton made a short talk and offered prayer.

"When it was through, Dr. Willingham read a card from a lady in the audience, who said she would give \$500 toward sending the young man who was ready to go to Dr. Hartwell in China.

"The audience sang 'Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow,' and Dr. Burrows picked up a hat, followed by others, and went through the congregation.

"One man, with tears streaming down his face, opened his pocketbook, turned it wrong side out, pouring its contents into the hat, and then throwing the pocketbook after it.

“Another man pulled a handsome ring from his finger and dropped it in the hat. Others put in money, the sums pledged and collected amounting to about \$3,000, but nobody kept a record, for they were pledges made with God and would be kept.

“At last the delegates and visitors went out, feeling that they had been to the very gateway of the heavenly city, and those who talked with the givers took knowledge that they had been with Jesus.”

A new era had, indeed, dawned upon Southern Baptists. A spirit of missionary interest was abroad in the land. Freed from the shackles of debt, the people were beginning to catch a vision of the “fields white unto harvest”—a vision which, during the years that followed, resulted in a constantly growing missionary enthusiasm, expressing itself in ever-increasing liberality. The tide had turned, and the people were ready to go forward. R. J. Willingham, his very being on fire with the love of Foreign Missions, his every energy directed to his great task, was the God-given leader to arouse them to a true sense of their responsibility, and to lead them step by step to greater and grander accomplishments.

“The Convention was simply wonderful,” he writes of the Texas Baptist Convention of 1898—“never saw anything like it.” Everywhere the interest was growing. It is not at all strange that the Secretary looked forward to the session of the Southern Baptist Convention which was to be held in Louisville in May, 1899. In an appeal to Southern Baptists to pray for this meeting, he writes:

“We realize that we are to meet our brethren there; but oh! we want to meet God in Louisville, and when the meeting is over, call it Bethel. We are going to do work for God. God, give us the greatest meeting for His glory that we have ever seen. Brethren and sisters, let us wait in fasting and prayer before our God.”



It is not at all strange that this was a great missionary Convention, and that Southern Baptists took a decided advance step, voting that during the following year the work should be enlarged 25 per cent. As the missionary enthusiasm in the Convention became greater and greater as the messengers planned for the proposed advance, Dr. Willingham asked if the brethren realized that the 25 per cent increase would mean the sending out of many new missionaries. Many voices were heard calling, “Amen”; “We mean it”; “We are in earnest.”

“Enlargement!” How that word was sounding out during the following year as the Secretary and other leaders urged the people to put into effect the resolution passed by the Convention. How the missionaries rejoiced at the thought of reinforcements; already glorious results were attending their efforts—hundreds were turning to the Lord, and they longed for others to help them reap the harvest. The Board took the Convention at its word and soon began to appoint new missionaries, special prayer having been asked by Southern Baptists that they might have wisdom for this important work. Gladly the Secretary threw himself into the work of arranging the many details involved in appointing new missionaries and in sending them to the foreign field.

Near the close of the Convention year, a change was made in the Assistant Secretaryship, as Dr. Barton, in January (1900), resigned to become Corresponding Secretary of the Arkansas State Mission Board. Dr. E. E. Bomar, pastor of the Church of Spartanburg, S. C., was called to succeed Dr. Barton, and entered upon the work February 1. Dr. Bomar brought to his new work the same missionary enthusiasm which had characterized him as a pastor, and a beautiful spirit which made him a most lovable associate. With eagerness, he threw himself into the spirit of the new era which had dawned upon Southern Baptists.

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In connection with the missionary wave which was sweeping over the country, too much cannot be written of the impetus given mission work by the religious press. In times of stress, or in times of advancement, the editors of these Baptist papers have ever sought to inspire the people to noble achievements. How many encouraging words were found in the columns of their papers during these years of enlargement; how much space did they give to the words of the secretaries and the missionaries; and how many special missionary editions did they publish! There were many causes for the great missionary revival, but certainly among the most potent was the work of the consecrated and zealous editors.

The efforts made during the year 1899-1900 were not in vain. At the following Convention the Secretary was able to report that the 25 per cent increase in contributions had been made. The number of baptisms on the foreign field during the year, for the first time in the history of the Board, exceeded 1,000, God having honored their increase of 25 per cent in contributions by an increase of 58 per cent in conversions. Although Southern Baptists had made a glorious advance, their contributions for the year had averaged only about eight and three-quarter cents per member, while the contributions on the foreign field had averaged more than \$1 per member! Again the Convention ordered an advance, pledging to raise \$200,000. The following incident is related by the Secretary:

“The great Convention was drawing to a close at Hot Springs, Ark.; the shades of evening were falling over the scene; a very weary mission secretary sat thinking of the work ordered by the Convention for this year. His thoughts turned to the great God of missions. Was it wrong for the Secretary in his weakness and weariness almost to wish that God might give him some little token of His favor? He had received many blessings, and now seemed no time to look for something special, when everybody was anxious

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to leave and start home. The President's gavel fell; the Convention had gone into history. The Secretary waited to speak to a friend on the platform. Someone touched his elbow—a lady wished to see him just a moment. A sister who had been in the great mission meeting that day said she had stood with the others, thus signifying that she would help to raise \$200,000 this year. She said she wished then and there to make a pledge; the Secretary could look for a check soon for \$100. Just then she turned; a gentleman had appeared on the scene. He must have caught the words of the sister, for as he took the Secretary's hand he said, 'Make it \$250, brother.' God bless the noble women, who so often lead, and the men who have such wives and have sense and religion enough to co-operate with them in the great work of God.

"The check has just come, and lies before us as we write."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WIDENING INFLUENCE.\*

“And for an hour Dr. Willingham spoke on. But we cannot produce it here. R. J. Willingham is an easy man to listen to, but a hard man to reproduce. Gathering intensity as the argument proceeds, he carries his hearers with him, and the reporter finds his eyes filled with tears and his pencil idle in his hand.”—Florida daily newspaper.

“Dr. Willingham offered the closing prayer of the afternoon session. The remark was made by Governor Northern, President of the Convention, that he would rather go before God in prayer with Dr. Willingham than any other man he knew.”—Louisiana daily newspaper.

“The first speaker was the masterful Dr. R. J. Willingham, of Richmond. His sermon at 11 in the morning at the First Church was on ‘A Century of Missions.’ It is needless to say that it was powerful. Dr. Willingham is a great spiritual force, and is making Foreign Missions under his direction a constructive element in the Baptist churches of the South. To say that he is beloved is only to convey the faint meaning that human words can convey. The hearts of Southern Baptists are knit around him.”—North Carolina paper.

“There is no one who commands the attention of the Convention more thoroughly than the large-bodied, large-headed, large-hearted Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, Dr. R. J. Willingham.”—Baptist and Reflector.

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\*The description of R. J. Willingham, which is given in this chapter, may seem to some the work of a hero-worshiping daughter. The biographer, indeed, has felt a delicacy in incorporating so many extracts from articles in which he was praised; no true picture could be drawn, however, in which his popularity and influence were not shown, and the quotations cited are but a few of many expressions of love and esteem from which she has had to select.

“There is no man within the bounds of the Southern Baptist Convention more beloved by the brethren than Brother Willingham. A great big-hearted, God-conquered man, his heart on fire with sympathizing love for a poor, lost, dying world, he is the right man in the right place. God gave him to us, and he never fails to impress those with whom he comes in contact with the fact that he is God-sent and Spirit-led. His address was prefaced with a prayer by Brother Crumpton, Corresponding Secretary of State Board of Missions of Alabama. And then the address. Oh, that every Christian everywhere could have heard it. It was not so much what he said, but how he said it. We were all assured that our brother lived mighty close to the Father, and saw the lost condition of the world from that viewpoint. God bless our Brother Willingham, and give him to see the great work grow mightily in his hands.”—*Florida Baptist Witness*.

“Dr. Willingham’s speech was masterly. There is something about the man that lifts him high above one’s idea of the professional secretary. He seems the very incarnation of Foreign Missions, and when he talks one is swept along with mighty enthusiasm. It is impossible to hear him and withstand his message. Call it what you will, but he has the power to move men, and make them feel that the most important thing in the world is to give the gospel to the heathen.”—*Alabama Baptist*.

The above extracts from daily and religious papers are typical of the many expressions of commendation and love which were bestowed upon the Secretary as he traveled throughout the South addressing churches and conventions.

“The papers puff me so,” he writes to his wife, “that I hardly know how to let the people down easy. Is it not strange how the Lord will use a poor, weak instrument. I want to be more filled with His Spirit.”

And, indeed, he constantly felt his dependence upon God. Popularity and the marked results which crowned his efforts only made him more humble. Again and again, in his letters to his wife, he reveals his longings for Divine power.

"I preach here at Convention Sunday morning," he writes from Waco, Texas. "Oh, for God's Spirit and message."

Again he writes:

"I expect to speak here three times to-day. Oh, for grace and wisdom to say the right thing."

"I hope to make a good impression for Christ and His gospel—pray for that."

The last extract is taken from a letter written from Rochester, N. Y., in 1900. That he did make "a good impression for Christ" can be seen in the following extract:

"It was a delight to all the Southern boys in the Seminary when we learned that Dr. Willingham would address the Judson Missionary Society.

"The Park Avenue Baptist Church caught the good news and secured his service for supply work Sunday, the 4th. The morning sermon was full of spiritual food; the audience was strengthened and went from the church rejoicing over what they had received. The heaven soon permeated the Seminary, and that night the faculty and student body eagerly sought seats in the crowded auditorium of the church. The discourse of the evening was on Missions, and the audience, which had been accustomed to listen to a thirty minutes' discourse, sat for an hour and a quarter in deep adoration of the Word of God as it was so graphically set forth by Dr. Willingham.

"At 7:30 Monday evening, in Rockefeller Hall, Mr. Willingham addressed the Society which invited him on 'The Pastor's Duty to Foreign Missions.' He spoke to the largest audience that the writer has ever seen in the hall on a like occasion. The student who remarked, 'If Dr. Willingham's style is an example of Southern oratory, I want it,' was no less affected by the wonderful message than the rest of the audience. And the professor who said, 'If you have any more such men as Dr. Willingham down South, send them up,' voiced the sentiment of all who heard the address.

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It is not at all strange that the efforts of a man so earnestly desiring to be used by the Holy Spirit and so

thoroughly dependent upon Him for guidance should have been attended with glorious results. Audiences were profoundly moved by his presentation of Foreign Missions, the quickened interest of the people being shown in their gifts—some increasing their contributions, others surrendering their lives for service on the foreign field.

“My trip is a blessed one,” he writes to his wife. “*Men* and *money* seem to be the results.”

Again he writes:

“I wrote you of the glorious meeting we had in Hattiesburg last night. It is wonderful how the people give when the work is presented to them.”

Such references as the following constantly appeared in his letters and on his post cards:

“Had great meeting in Valdosta last night. \$1,000!!!”

“Great meeting last night. Great day in M. yesterday. First Church, \$3,000 to \$3,500. The Lord be praised.”

“Great meeting. Finest for Foreign Missions this fall. Glorious.”

After his visit to a church which had been receiving aid from one of the Mission Boards until a few months previous, the pastor writes:

“I must write you a few lines, for my heart overflows with gratitude to God for His wonderful blessing upon us last Sunday. That was a marvelously great meeting. Think of it, the brother who gave the one hundred dollars had been opposed to missions, and others who gave \$50, \$25, \$5, etc., had strenuously opposed doing anything at all until we first paid the \$4,000 debt upon our building. Truly nothing is too hard for the Lord. The Young People’s meeting was suspended for the night, and we had a great jollification in its stead. Nearly everybody had something to say. We had some present at night who did not hear you in the afternoon, and they asked the privilege voluntarily of giving.

One who heard about the meeting, but could not come, sent word to us to count him also. But the best of all, three mothers publicly offered their children to God, and requested us to join them in prayer to God that He would save and call them to some foreign field. Another brother with two sons and a daughter made the same statement. \* \* \* This marks a distinct epoch in the history of our church."

One great aid to Dr. Willingham in his work was the love and esteem which his brethren so constantly maintained toward him. Wherever he went he was most cordially received. At the conclusion of the meetings in which he spoke, people thronged to the front to clasp his hand and to assure him of their affection, pledge their loyalty, or speak of his influence over their lives. The homes of rich and poor were open to him. In Northern Baptist territory he also found cordiality and manifestations of esteem. The hospitable spirit which pervades the following letter from Dr. Henry G. Weston, of Crozer Theological Seminary, is typical of the kindness of his Northern and Southern Baptist brethren:

"It will give me great pleasure if you will be my guest during your visit to this Seminary. You shall have the freedom of the house, freedom to entertain and be entertained or not, just as you please; freedom to come and go at your own sweet will, to accept all the invitations you receive, only do me the honor to make my house your home while you are with us."

Dr. Willingham made a charming visitor. His geniality quickly dispelled that feeling of constraint which some people feel in the presence of a preacher. Vitally interested in people, he enjoyed conversing with them; and, although he seldom related jokes in his sermons and addresses, he was fond of both hearing and telling them in his social circle. He delighted to tease the young people whom he met on his visits, especially if any signs of romance could be detected. Those who had formerly admired him as a preacher



or missionary leader, after a visit from him, found themselves loving him as an interesting and lovable companion. He enjoyed and appreciated the hospitality extended him, but as the years went by, he stayed more and more frequently at hotels rather than in private homes, as in the hotels he was able to find more quiet and time for meditation and was thus better fitted to make a forcible presentation of the work.

Dr. Willingham's power over young men was marked. As he spoke to students, on his frequent visits to colleges, his heart was stirred at the thought of putting upon them a great missionary impress; and many a young life was surrendered for service on the foreign field as he poured forth his burning words. After hearing him speak, a college student writes:

"Last Monday was a day of decisions in my life, and I want to thank you for coming to our college to speak to us on Missions. When the call came to me some years ago to enter God's ministry, with it came the impression to go to the foreign field. I did not want to go, and tried to throw aside that feeling. I would not study the question for fear of having the matter laid so heavy upon my heart that I should be obliged to declare my intention to go if I had peace about it. I was a coward. When the minister spoke on Missions, I tried to say that was for someone else, not me.

"When I came here and was entreated by the boys to join the mission study class, I would not, fearing that information on the matter would force me to a decision. Suffice it to say, that when you came and spoke to us last Monday I saw that the time had come for me to make up my mind or be so miserable that I could not work. I came to my room after hearing you, took up my book, and for more than an hour tried to study, but was in such agony that I had to give up without knowing one word I had seen. I decided to go and see you, but still had not made up my mind. On the way I felt that I must go off alone to God in prayer over the matter. I did so, and asked him to

make my duty plain to me. It was the hardest struggle of my life to say, 'Thy will be done,' but when I did say, 'Lord, if it is Thy will that I should go to the foreign field, I am ready to go,' He spoke peace to my soul. My joy was great.

"I found that you were at the hotel sleeping some before train time, and decided to come back to see you at 2 a.m. that night. When I came the hotel man told me the train was two hours late, so I returned to my room.

"I graduate next year, and it is my purpose to sail for some point in Brazil the following autumn, if God opens the way."

Rev. W. B. Glass, now a missionary in Hwaughien, China, writes:

"It was during my college days at Baylor that I first met and came under the influence of Dr. Willingham. It was he more than anyone else that in a public way influenced me to give my life to the cause of Foreign Missions. The most notable occasion that I now recall was in the autumn of 1900, when the Texas Convention met in Waco in the old Baptist Tabernacle which stood on the same lot with our dormitory. It was Sunday afternoon. The hour had been set apart for a great mass meeting on Foreign Missions. The review of the world-field, world-conditions and the appeal for men and women to answer the call of God for laborers by Dr. Willingham was the most powerful I have ever heard. The great audience of 3,000 souls was moved as by a mighty wind. There was a great offering up of life in response to the mighty appeal. I felt that I ought to stand there and offer myself to God and to the Board, but I hesitated. Not many days after, however, I went to my teacher, Professor J. S. Tanner, and made known my decision."

His visits to the Seminary were a real delight. He thus describes one of these visits:

"It was the great pleasure of the Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board to spend January 1, 1904, in the Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. What an inspiration to stand before about three hundred young men

and women preparing to tell of Jesus and His love in home and foreign lands. No other occasion seems so fraught with weighty responsibility. Here are pastors for the home land and missionaries for the foreign lands. The faculty and students are trying to raise \$2,000 this year for Foreign Missions. This is not to include what they give through their churches regularly, but to be a free gift over and above their other gifts. The regular mission meeting was held in the forenoon of January 1st, when the Corresponding Secretary spoke on 'The Foreign Missionary—The Call, Qualifications, Work, Trials and Triumphs.' By request of the students, a special service was called for the afternoon, when those who were considering the question of giving their lives to the Lord for the foreign work would be present. About sixty or seventy came to the meeting, of whom thirty said they had fully decided to go if they could do so, and sixteen more said they were prayerfully considering the question. What a time for earnest prayers to God.

"We wish we had time to speak of how delighted we were at the excellent condition in which we found everything connected with the Seminary. But does not the above speak volumes, even more than we could say? God's Spirit is there."

In a letter to Dr. Mullins soon after his inauguration as President of the Seminary, he writes:

"I believe you are going to make us a great President. May the Spirit of the Lord rest upon you and give you grace and wisdom for your important work. If at any time I can serve you in any way, do not hesitate to call on me. Our work is one, and with united hearts let us press forward for the Master's glory."

In a letter to Dr. Willingham, Dr. Mullins writes:

"One of the peculiar joys that I have in this new work is in the feeling that once more I stand side by side with you in promoting the great cause of Foreign Missions; for you may be sure that all the influence that I possess shall be made to tell in that direction among the students of the Seminary."

Dr. Willingham's influence over the Seminary students cannot be estimated.

"Few men have influenced my life as did Dr. Willingham," writes Dr. W. F. Yarborough. "His occasional visits and addresses before the Seminary while I was a student there were epoch-making in my life. Much of my interest in missions I trace to his inspiring contact with me at this stage of my experience."

Dr. C. C. Coleman writes:

"He was just the kind of man to be a young preacher's hero. His impressive presence, musical voice, happy, affectionate disposition, glowing enthusiasm, blazing earnestness, regal imagination, cosmopolitan sympathies, and shrewd, generous counsels drew young, ardent natures to him as naturally as the magnet draws the iron. He was in his prime during my Seminary days at Louisville. He was a frequent visitor, and of all the many notables who came none received a more enthusiastic welcome from the students. One of the crowning glories of the Southern Seminary is its missionary spirit. No man outside of its faculty did more than Dr. Willingham to make every student a fiery advocate of Christ's world-wide program."

In regard to Dr. Willingham's influence over him after he had entered the pastorate, Dr. Coleman continues:

"A visit from Dr. Willingham to my first pastorate was an epoch in the life of church and preacher. His piercing eye took in everything. After dinner he sat down and explained the situation as if he had known the field for years, and gave advice so wise, so loving, so comprehensive that a new day dawned at once. His prophetic appeal that morning multiplied the church's gifts to missions. His statesmanlike counsels that afternoon furnished the basis for plans and organizations that have blessed that church and other churches for years."

Not only were theological students, preachers and missionaries influenced by him, but many engaged in secular

callings caught inspiration from his message and life. Months before Dr. Willingham's death a young professional man wrote to one of the members of his family:

"I recall vividly meeting your father in April, I think, 1898. I gave him one of the first dollars I ever earned for Foreign Missions, and I remember distinctly now his burning words and the impression he made upon us all."

A young lawyer writes:

"Even with the comparatively little time that it was my privilege to be in his company, I found such a stimulant and nourishment of my faith in Jesus Christ. He never knew what he had been to me in this way, but when I was passing through the valley of doubt I will never forget a day's visit in our home from him, and the very tone of his voice when he said 'Jesus' made an impression on my heart that will last through the ages. There was no conversation with me especially and there was no deliberate turn of the conversation to religious topics; it was just an illustration of 'out of the abundance of the heart.'"

In quick succession the years passed by. In September, 1903, the tenth anniversary of his connection with the Board, Dr. T. P. Bell writes:

"These have been years of earnest, self-sacrificing work on his part, and on his labors God has bestowed abundant blessings, while both he and the work have grown steadily in the hearts of the people. We have not known any man, in any sphere of life, who was more perfectly the incarnation of the cause he represents. In his single-hearted devotion to that cause he reminds us of the early professors of the Seminary, as they gave themselves, with all that was in them, to its upbuilding."

As the Secretary reviewed the ten years' service, his heart was filled with thanksgiving, and in the *Foreign Mission Journal* he expresses his gratitude for kindness extended him by the Foreign Mission Board, by the brethren

of churches, associations and conventions, by editors and by missionaries. In conclusion, he writes:

“Have the ten years been long? No, no; so *very, very short!* And the time to come, will it be long? It is all in God’s hands, and that is best. Ten years of service only shows more clearly the great work to be done. A lost world to be won to God. Men and women in God’s name and for His glory must give themselves to the work in home and foreign lands. But we work not alone. His power is given us, and His presence is with us. In His name we press forward.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HIGH TIDE CONVENTIONS.

A great Convention is in session. Upon the audience crowding the large auditorium a hush falls as R. J. Willingham comes forward on the platform, his hand lifted for prayer. At the conclusion of that earnest, heart-felt appeal, as he pauses a moment, the lips of his large and expressive mouth tightly compressed, let us study a picture of him penned by Dr. Alex W. Bealer, who has so often written of his appearances before Conventions:

“R. J. Willingham was a Master of Assemblies. I cannot begin to number the times I have heard him speak, and yet not once did he fail to grip his audience with a magnetic power that sometimes seemed almost weird. If the Convention was excited over a spirited debate, it grew calm when he began to speak; if it was listless, he would arouse it to keen attention before a dozen sentences had fallen from his lips. It has been long since a man of his unique power appeared among us; it will be long before another will arise to stir the hearts of Southern Baptists as did this remarkable man.

“What was the secret of his power? It was not due to his good looks. It was not due to his oratory. In the strict meaning of the word, he was not an orator. He used none of the tricks of the declaimer or the rhetorician, if he knew them, and rarely did he tell an anecdote or quote poetry. And yet no man ever heard him without being gripped by his words, moved to tears, or roused to a sense of duty. He spoke to my people at Thomasville, Georgia, on Monday night and moved them mightily. A negro doctor in the back of the church, who had a curiosity to see the man of whom he had heard, was so moved that he arose and asked the privilege of contributing twenty-five dollars to help him carry on his work.

“The power of this great man? It was due to several reasons. He was every inch a man. Physically he towered above most of his brethren. His big body, his strong voice, and his whole general appearance impressed you with the fact that a real man was before you to deliver the message of a man. His democratic spirit must not be overlooked. Secretly, soon after I met him, I rejoiced to think that he had been so cordial to me. I felt that I had made a favorable impression upon him. Later on I learned that a thousand or more of our brethren, some of them men from the humblest walks of life, felt just as I did. He was cordial to all men because he had a heart that went out to all mankind. His love was so deep that it could not be confined to one nation, to one race. It reached around the world and found something to love in every man, no matter where he lived, no matter what the color of his skin.

“Then, Bob Willingham—he was too great to be called Doctor—knew the Lord. To anyone who heard him talk it was apparent that he had met his Master face to face, had loved Him when he met Him, had opened his heart and invited Him in to sit upon the throne of his life. His invitation was so cordial and so honest that the Lord accepted it and filled his life with power. That made him simple in manners, democratic in spirit, and sympathetic in heart.

“When I studied him it seemed to me that one hand was always resting in the pierced palm of Him to whom he belonged and the other was reaching out toward mankind. The power from above flowed out to draw those he touched, as the flecks of steel are drawn to the magnet’s heart. All these things combined to make him a rare personality, one loved of God and favored of men, for all of them who knew him believed in him.”

Dr. W. W. Landrum, whose contagious enthusiasm added fervor to so many of these Conventions, writes:

“Personality such as his was powerful. At times when he addressed great conventions on Christ’s last commission his mien, manner, and speech were nothing short of majestic. His great physical frame trembled with uncontrollable emotion. His eyes shone through falling tears. There was, besides, a richness, a sweetness, a tenderness in



his tones seldom equaled by our Masters of the platform. Unction, an anointing for special service by the Holy Spirit, an indefinable but easily recognized and always-felt psychic force, issued out of him.

"I can recall occasions when he seemed to me to be what a modern philosopher would call a 'superman.' Like Atlas of old, he appeared to be bearing on his broad breast the weight of the world's woe. Then, with a new light from heaven flung before him, I have beheld him throwing the great arms of his eloquence around a thousand of his brethren, hugging them, lifting them up to a fresh vision of the Savior, and then letting them down at the foot of the cross for a new oath of loyalty and love. His personality pulsed with power to arouse and move Southern Baptists in a marvelous way."

Southern Baptists had, indeed, awakened to the importance of Foreign Missions and their Conventions were surcharged with missionary enthusiasm.

"If we mistake not," writes the editor of the *Christian Index* soon after the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Asheville, N. C., in 1902, "this meeting of the Convention emphasized the fact that the brethren generally have the fullest confidence in their boards and are prepared to trust them in the important and often delicate matters that come before them. . . . The Convention was in no mood for listening to growlers and soreheads. It had no time to waste on obstructionists. *It had work to do for the Lord*, and was intent on doing it."

The above words could be truly written of the Conventions of many succeeding years. A spirit of peace and harmony and of missionary interest was abroad in the land and the messengers to the Convention, listening with increasing enthusiasm to the glowing reports of their Secretaries, each year expressed their gratitude for God's wonderful blessings upon their efforts by attempting greater things. God's Spirit seemed to be present with power in the Conventions, and at times Pentecostal scenes were enacted.

Foreign Missions never failed to elicit the profound interest of the people, and the appearance of the beloved Secretary was hailed with pleasure. Audiences wearied by sitting for hours in the Convention hall would hang upon his words. Gatherings would be swept by his utterances. Was he eloquent? If eloquence be the ability to stir to the very depths the hearts of his hearers, he was eloquent. If eloquence be the power to incite people to greater achievements, he possessed it. His language was simple, but what a wealth of feeling surcharged his utterances! Often a tear, a tremor of the voice, a pause, indicated that there were emotions which could not be suppressed by this man whose physical proportions were far exceeded by the size of his heart. Behind his words, the hearers saw his deep personal devotion to God and they could not but be wonderfully moved by the God-given message coming straight from his flaming heart.

On the first day of the Convention, Dr. Willingham would read extracts from the report of the Foreign Mission Board, which included reports from each mission, and a resume by the Secretary of the work accomplished and of the opportunities offered—a report which invariably overflowed with gratitude for the glorious results recounted.

The reading of the report from the Southern Baptist Convention in 1905 is thus described in the *Religious Herald*:

“Friday afternoon the order was the reading of reports of the three boards of the Convention. First of all, the imperial Willingham read the report on Foreign Missions. It created almost a wild enthusiasm, and was punctured from time to time with cries from the audience, ‘Read that again.’ The close was marked with loud applause in spite of the heavy wielding of the President’s gavel.”

The presentation of Foreign Missions later in the session would be fraught with great interest. Pastors who had

been successful in arousing missionary zeal in their churches would sometimes address the Convention. Missionaries from the far-flung battle line would thrill the hearts of their hearers with their burning words. Recruits ready for the battle would speak of their longings to be at their new posts. With a few forcible words the Secretary would introduce the workers, now telling an incident that led to the decision of this newly-appointed missionary to go to the foreign field, now relating a hardship of this man who for several years had been working in a foreign country, now with his arm around a veteran missionary pleading, "Brethren, be kind to this old hero."

Sometimes he would introduce a missionary in foreign costume. At times he would ask a worker to sing a hymn in the language of the people to whom he had been sent—usually interrupting the singer before the conclusion of the hymn to ask the audience to sing the next verse in English while the missionary continued in the foreign language. In different tongues but in the same tune and with the same spirit, missionary and people would pour out their souls in thanksgiving to God.

The hearts of the people would be thrilled as they heard the missionaries tell of their experiences and of the opportunities and needs of the fields. How earnestly would the Secretary plead for men and women to give their lives to the great work; how impressively would he emphasize the responsibility of the individual in evangelizing the world! Often as he paused to give an opportunity for an offering of self, many would rise, signifying the surrender of their lives for service on the foreign field.

The enthusiasm of the people would express itself in another tangible manner. Almost without exception, the Convention would every year instruct that the Foreign Mission Board lay out its work on an enlarged basis. Now the order would be that twenty-five new missionaries should

be sent out the following year; again and again, that a 25 per cent advance should be made. In spite of the enlargement, the Board was able to report each year of this period, with the single exception of 1906, that there was no debt. In 1903, for the first time in the history of the Board, contributions reached \$200,000; in the brief space of three years they had reached \$300,000; and in another year's time \$400,000. Surely Southern Baptists were anxious to see their work enlarged. The author would not convey the impression that R. J. Willingham alone was responsible for this wonderful advance in the work. The great wave of missionary enthusiasm was divine in its origin and, therefore, must spread; throughout the South were many whose hearts burned with the love of missions and whose noblest efforts were directed to the spread of the gospel throughout the world; but surely R. J. Willingham, "the incarnation of Foreign Missions" as he has so often been called—surely he had "come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

Dr. Willingham was aided in the work by the knowledge that he possessed the confidence and love of his brethren, evidences of which were constantly showered upon him. At the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Savannah in 1903, the enthusiasm of the people became unbounded. A few extracts from religious papers in regard to this meeting follow:

"Rev. Preston Blake, of Kentucky, said the quarter of a million and much more could be raised. He called attention to the fact that Dr. Willingham was the greatest missionary at work in the territory of the Convention. Rev. J. R. Farish, of Mississippi, thought the spirit of Alexander Poindexter had descended upon Willingham. He was the greatest man in the land, and God had given him the power to reach the hearts and pocketbooks of the people.

"Rev. P. T. Hale, of Kentucky, said Southern Baptists were foolish in penning up such a man as Willingham in

Richmond. He had no business in doing office work. Let this great hand and magnetic personality go out and plead with Southern Baptists and not less than half a million dollars will be raised for Foreign Missions next year. . . . ”  
 —*Christian Index*.

“Dr. Willingham is a modest man, and it was painful to him to have to hear the brethren speak his praise; but it is right for the brethren to show their appreciation of him while he lives. More than any one man he is the inspiration of the great missionary wave that is sweeping over our beloved Southland.”

“One who has known R. J. Willingham for years in his present work is struck by the great power of the man and his remarkable influence in the Convention. Surely he has been growing during these years. Strong, spiritual, tender, he is a typical leader of men.”—*South Carolina Baptist*.

Dr. Willingham’s birthday, the 15th of May, usually occurred during the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. While attending the Convention in Nashville in 1904, he passed his fiftieth mile-stone. The note-book containing the lines of youthful aspiration, written by him twenty-five years before, had for many years lain packed away with old letters, and in all probability had been entirely forgotten by him; singularly enough, however, he again penciled on a leaf of a pocket note-book the yearnings of his heart. The lines follow:

“On my fiftieth birthday God has graciously guided and blessed me. I long to be purer and more used of him. Among my greatest blessings have been my mother and my wife.

“Take me and use me, Lord, all for Thee. May 15, 1904.”

It is not at all strange that he was used mightily for the Lord, and that the Convention in Nashville was one of the greatest in the history of Southern Baptists. The *Baptist Argus* gives an account of the missionary climax reached at this meeting:

“Just as it ought to have been, the climax of glory came when we reached the Foreign Mission work. It did not come in the order of events until Monday, but in reality it got there at the beginning. If there was a prayer, it had its chief burden for Foreign Missions; if a song, its waves were laden with salvation for the nations, and if the real-hearted people of the Convention who came for the Lord’s business were asked about going home they said, ‘Not until after Monday.’ Everything hung on Monday, and that day, which heretofore had shown only a beggarly parade of empty benches, now saw a vast and immense throng of men and women ablaze with missionary zeal. Not until Monday afternoon did the Pentecostal storm begin in its power. Willingham was at the helm, weighted with colossal cares, full of spiritual alertness, and trembling under the stress of deepest emotion, while the ever-fervent and discreet Bomar sat near-by ready for every service that skill could render. Even the Committee reports flashed flames of gospel fire; the men called on to pray choked and stopped, convulsed with the passion of the hour. The returned missionaries seemed transfigured, spoke with fervid eloquence, and in every case were very brief. The new missionaries were called out, and what thrilling words they spoke! We never heard such apt and stirring messages from youthful lips. Now and then an overwrought man who had felt that he ought to be a missionary and had failed for some reason to go would spring up to pour out his sorrow over a wasted opportunity. Then, in a startling array, came the host of those who had decided to go, and then the yet greater number of those who were still wrestling with the problem of duty. It looked as if every new aspect of the meeting grew more impressive and powerful than that which went before. Songs were slipped in here and there, and they were caught by hundreds of throats as if they were aching for utterance. One or two tunes were set ruinously high, and at other times would have provoked smiles and probably broken down, but the exalted feeling of the people made it easy for them to climb the highest notes with ease and joy. As for weeping, it went on all the time, and yet it was dignified, with no noise, and no hysteric sign. The gallery was well filled, and mainly with women, and what holy, fervent, sympathetic women they were—many of them young women, stirred to their

depths as to their duty to go. Fathers and mothers were struggling with the thought of giving their children to the Lord for the foreign work, and some of them breathing hallelujahs that their children were already there. No money was asked for; it was no time for that—it was a character-making hour. The dear old woman who said that it was 'worse than Pentecost' meant well—it meant that, to her, it was more intense and moving than she imagined Pentecost could possibly have been. We do not say that it was better than Pentecost; it was Pentecost in genuine missionary power.

"The meaning of the meeting was deep and instructive. It told us that the Lord is with us. It showed that our people are getting together. It proved that the world is getting out of the hearts of the brethren and getting on their hearts. It showed that we are seeing that the missionary is more needed even than the pastor. The call now is not so much to come as to go. It is quite apparent that our churches are discovering their immediate mission—to give the gospel to the entire human race. We seem to be coming toward that glorious time when a nation will be born in a day."

The year 1904 cannot be passed without mention of the gift made by Mr. Walker Brookes, during the meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention in Columbus. Never before had so liberal a gift been made by an individual to the work of the Foreign Mission Board. Many years before Walker Brookes, though several years younger than Robert Willingham, had attended the same little country Sunday school and his life also had been greatly influenced by the Superintendent, his own father. A lawyer of means, he delighted to give liberally to Foreign Missions. At this Convention, while making an impassioned plea for Foreign Missions, Mr. Brookes exclaimed:

"There are preachers who have given up everything to preach. What are the business men doing? Are they not to have any part in this great work? I have never heard of a business man giving as much as five thousand dollars to missions."

Suddenly stopping in his speech he extended his hand toward Dr. Willingham and exclaimed:

"Pardon me, brother, for speaking so long. I will give you five thousand dollars for Foreign Missions."

"The hearts of men thrilled at the greatness of the gift," writes the *Christian Index*. "Some were choked by tears, some were radiant with joy and others from the fullness of their heart sent a fervent 'Thank God' floating up toward the throne. One brother, as Dr. Willingham and others caught the hand of the brother and thanked him in the name of humanity, started up 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' and how they did sing."

Mr. Brookes' gift was duplicated the following year during the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City by a contribution from a woman. Dr. Bealer, in the *Christian Index*, writes of this incident:

"When the address was concluded, Dr. Willingham, for a few moments, bared his great heart to his brethren and stirred them as no other man can on this subject. He spoke of the struggles through which he had gone during the past year and the obstacles he had met, but, thanks to the power of God and the activity of the brethren, he had come safely through them all and was able to report all bills paid. . . . He begged the brethren, one and all, to center their thoughts for this year upon the salvation of souls, begged them to pray to God for the salvation of multitudes both in the home land and on the foreign field. We needed men to do this work, and he begged the mothers to pray that God might call their sons. In another ten years he felt that Southern Baptists should have no less than a thousand native preachers at work on the foreign field. . . ."

"The Convention was in a white heat of earnestness by this time and there was a season of heart searching among the hundreds who sat beneath the witchery of the wonderful Spirit of God, for no one doubted but that He was in charge of that meeting.

"He begged the brethren to authorize him to send out this message of cheer to the soldiers of the cross who were out upon the firing line.



“While Dr. Willingham was talking a brother asked if he might interrupt him to give him a note that had just been handed to him. Dr. Willingham said he might, and the note was handed up.

“The stillness of death brooded over the great congregation as the doctor, with trembling fingers, unfolded the note and bent forward to read. It was a long, narrow bit of paper that had been folded up, and when the big Secretary looked up there were tears in his eyes and a holy joy on his face.

“‘Brethren,’ he said in a subdued voice, but one that was heard all over the hall, ‘it is a check for our work. It comes from a woman, and it is for five thousand dollars.’

“A few fervent ‘Thank Gods’ were heard, tears flowed, unbidden, to many eyes; some overcome with emotion sat down and buried their faces in their hands, and then, somewhere from the heart of the stillness of God that filled the room, like a bird flying upward, a snow-white bird, the old Doxology arose, gathering volume as it went, until, like a mighty wind, the praises of those waiting men and women were wafted upward to the listening ears of God.”

The missionary enthusiasm which pervaded the meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention was also found in various State Conventions, and at times Pentecostal blessings were poured out upon the people.

The occasions which have been described are but a few of many inspirational meetings; perhaps, however, these few strokes will picture R. J. Willingham, the times and the missionary spirit which permeated Southern Baptists. What was the secret of his power? In the introduction to a sermon entitled “The Neglected Note in the Mission Appeal,” published in the *Home and Foreign Fields*, November, 1916, Dr. John Jeter Hurt answers this question:

“Let’s turn the cycles back some six or eight times and stop about the middle of May. The Southern Baptist Convention is in session, and the hour is that for Foreign Missions. The Secretary, who is big of body and brain and heart, has spoken for forty minutes. Every delegate is

moved at the center, and the Spirit of God is presiding. Business men stand up to say we must do something; young men and young women rise to say they want to go; matrons take rings from their fingers to give to missions.

"We preachers, secretaries and laymen have spoken on missions, and it did not happen that way. Why? We gather the facts from the fields; we get the latest figures from the office; we put all manner of pictures upon the walls; and we tell of the things our people solemnly resolved when in annual Convention assembled. No hearer could affirm with reason that our sermons on missions are prepared indifferently. But back to the 'Why.'

"And that calls us back to the man and the method that moved the Convention every year. He believed in the *Mission Journal*, and circulated it wherever he went. He saw the value of charts, and sold them all over the South. He felt the need of study classes, and exhorted the people to foster them. He felt the pressure of enormous debts that had to be lifted. He sounded all these notes in proper places, but the one vital note was never neglected—whether in sermon, speech, or private appeal. And that note was the note of my text, namely, *The Jesus who died for you and me died for the others also.*"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ENLARGEMENT.

The new missionary era which was ushered in during the closing years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the new dawned not upon Southern Baptists alone. In all Christian lands, among various denominations, a wider vision had come to those interested in missions. The great Ecumenical Conference which was held in New York in 1900 brought together representatives from all lands which had been reached by evangelical missions. As the workers told of the great things which had been accomplished and of the greater needs still to be met, as men like Dr. Speer and Dr. Mott thrilled the hearts of their hearers with their inspiring utterances, the zeal of the people was kindled anew, and forces were put into operation which are still productive of good. The progress given woman's work at this, the greatest gathering of Christian workers the world had ever known, was a striking proof of the wonderful growth of that work. Not less prominence was given to the Young People's Movement. Men and women, young and old, seemed awakening to the importance of the task of evangelizing the world.

The south was prospering as she had never before; her wealth was rapidly increasing; and men could afford to give liberally to missions. Southern Baptists were constantly increasing their contributions. Pastors were leading their people to greater gifts. Churches which had formerly given small contributions, gave first the salary of a missionary, and in a few year's time the salaries of two. The church in North Carolina, which in 1903 gave less than \$100; in 1904, \$500; in 1906, \$1,000; and in 1907, \$1,200, is but an example of many other churches which rapidly made great

increases in their contributions. Not only churches but associations, societies and individuals were urged to assume the support of a missionary.

Much could be written of the Woman's Missionary Union as a factor in the growth of missionary enthusiasm and endeavor among Southern Baptists. The opposition which this organization encountered during the years of its beginnings was overcome by the excellent results of the work done by the women—work performed in a modest and unassuming, but efficient manner. The liberal and ever-increasing contributions of the women added materially to the resources of the Boards; and, in addition, the efforts to enlist the Sunday Schools in the work of the Southern Baptist Convention as presented by the different Boards, the organization of young people's societies in churches and colleges, and other phases of endeavor carried on by the Union accomplished untold good in informing the people and in arousing missionary interest.

Dr. Willingham was ever the friend of the women and their work. Soon after becoming Secretary, he writes to a correspondent the following:

“When Christ was here, some of those who served Him best were women, and so it has been for all ages and will be until He comes again.”

The work of the Woman's Missionary Union is closely interwoven with that of the Foreign Mission Board (as it is with that of the other Boards), and the plans of each are often dependent upon the co-operation of the other. Miss Annie Armstrong, at that time the efficient Corresponding Secretary of the Woman's Missionary Union—the woman to whom “more than any one person the Union owes its growth”; the woman who for eighteen years without remuneration gave to the work her thought, time, untiring energies and influence—proved to Dr. Willingham during

the thirteen years of their association in missionary work a friend, a real co-worker and helper. Most cordial relations also existed between him and Miss Armstrong's successors, Miss Edith Crane and Miss Kathleen Mallory. Especially warm was the friendship which existed between him and Miss Fannie E. S. Heck, who, during the many years in which she served the Union as President, by her tongue, pen and efforts inspired Southern Baptist women and young people to so noble achievements.

Dr. Willingham counted it a privilege to speak to the "sisters" whether in their annual meetings, state meetings or smaller gatherings. How often and how beautifully would he pay his tribute to Christian womanhood, graphically contrasting the degradation of heathen women—"those women who are somebody's daughters, somebody's sisters." Women were among the first large contributors to the work; and the foundation of the Annuity plan was a gift made by a woman in 1899 through the Woman's Missionary Union.

Dr. Willingham was much honored and loved by the women. At the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City in 1905, their devotion was shown by a beautiful act. Walking into the corridor of the hotel where he expected to meet a sister who had asked for a conference with him, he found not one woman, but about twenty-five women who were eagerly awaiting his arrival. Having learned that the day was his fifty-first birthday, at the suggestion of Mrs. W. D. Chipley, of Florida, they had secured a silver loving-cup on which was engraved his name; the date and place; and the inscription, "May your years be many in the work." This beautiful expression of esteem touched him deeply; and the cup was ever highly prized by him, occupying a place of honor in his home.

The Young People's Movement also had a great effect upon the development of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions.

The Student Volunteer Movement not only influenced many young men and women to give their lives in service on the foreign field, but awakened among countless others a real interest in missions. Soon after Dr. Willingham became Secretary he attended the Second International Convention of this movement. He was greatly impressed with its wonderful opportunities for enlisting the young people and was ever its friend, throughout the years seeking to advance it by his contributions and his influence. The Fourth International Convention, which met in Toronto, Canada, in 1902—described by him as “one of the best and most far-reaching meetings” he had ever attended—was memorable to him because during it his own son, who was also present, was considering the call to the mission field. The Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, four years later was also a great one. The Baptist denominational meeting, presided over by him during this Convention, was most tender and impressive; and many young men and women that afternoon consecrated their lives to mission work.

Glorious results on the foreign field accompanied the growth of missionary enthusiasm and endeavor among Southern Baptists. In large numbers the heathen were turning to Christ. The Boxer uprising, which raged with so much fury in China in 1900 and for awhile interfered with missionary work, was followed by a great turning of the people to Christianity. Japan was ready for the gospel; and after the close of the Russo-Japanese War, greater opportunities were offered missionary workers. In all lands the fields seemed “white unto harvest.” There was great exultation in the home land when it was reported that, for the first time in the history of the Board, the number of baptisms during the year had reached one thousand. Just four years later, two thousand baptisms for the year were reported. In his addresses, the happy Secretary declared that he had been forced to change his prayer from hundreds

to thousands, and he expected soon to be praying for tens of thousands. The missionaries, impressed with the wonderful opportunities presented, were pleading for reinforcements; in 1904 those in China requested that one hundred new workers be sent out. Many recruits were appointed during these years, fifty, the largest number in the history of the Board, being sent out in 1905.

Phases of the work hitherto undeveloped were coming into prominence. In 1901, Dr. T. W. Ayers and Dr. P. S. Evans, Jr., were sent to China for medical mission work. Before this time it had been difficult to find Christian physicians who were willing to devote their lives to service on the foreign field. The value of Medical Missions now began to be recognized, and this phase of the work rapidly developed. In 1907, Southern Baptists had on the foreign field three hospitals and twelve physicians. Dr. J. M. Oxner, of Pingtu, China, for three years averaged 5,000 patients a year, which he treated in a room 8x12 feet. He pleaded repeatedly for a hospital; but, before the Board could secure enough funds to grant his request, the startling words had been flashed under the waters, "Oxner is dead." He had died from overwork. In a hospital in Pingtu which bears his name others now carry on his work.

New emphasis was also given to the importance of publication plants and theological schools. Missionaries had learned that their work must be put into permanent form; the printing press had been found to be a necessity, and each year millions of pages were circulated among native Christians and heathen. The prejudice against native preachers, workers, and schools which had been felt by some during the days of the "Gospel Mission" trouble, had gradually passed away, and missionaries and missionary leaders were realizing, as never before, that the nations must finally be won by men of their own blood, and that it was of great importance that the natives should be properly

trained. The number of theological schools during these years increased to seven, in which in 1907 more than one hundred men were trained.

"We are not evangelizing simply to educate men," writes Dr. Willingham in regard to theological schools in 1904, "but we are educating men for the great work of evangelization."

The number of schools for native children began to increase also, and the Board became more and more convinced of the importance of this phase of the work. During the first seven years of the century the number of schools (including theological) increased from forty-five to one hundred and eight. Dr. Willingham writes in 1904 the following:

"Let it be remembered that unless the native Christians have help, their children must grow up in ignorance, or be trained in the schools which teach the false religions from which the parents have been rescued. It is not wisdom to preach to the parents, and then, after they have accepted Christ, neglect the children, and let them be trained in the superstition and iniquity from which the parents have been rescued. As a rule, converts in heathen lands are from the poorer classes, and they need help, especially when we remember that oftentimes they are ostracized and suffer the loss of property, and even occupation for the cause of Christ. We are doing a good work in helping them train their children to become useful men and women with proper ideas of the Christian religion.

"Besides the schools which are being helped, there are others connected with our missions which do not receive one cent of help from our Board, and yet they are doing a vast amount of good."

In 1903 the Southern Baptist Convention instructed the Board to "carefully consider the advisability of opening new fields for missionary work." Before many months had passed, a mission had been opened in Argentina, South America, a country in which Southern Baptists had never



before worked. During this period, a number of new missions were opened in countries in which the Board was already conducting work, one of the most important being the mission established in Interior China.

In addition to the new work, there was a general "lengthening of the cords and strengthening of the stakes" in the missions already established. Buildings and equipment were furnished for seminaries, schools, and hospitals, and much needed homes for the missionaries, chapels, and churches were built.

It is not at all strange that the growth of the missionary interest in this country and the development of the work on the foreign field necessitated an increased number of workers in the Foreign Mission Rooms in Richmond. There were twice as many missionaries on the foreign field in 1907 as there were when Dr. Willingham became Secretary; three times as many native workers; six times as many schools, enrolling 2,609 scholars in contrast with 598; a church membership four times as large; the annual contributions on the foreign field five times as large; 2,239 baptisms reported for the year in contrast to 383. The contributions in the home country had increased from almost \$156,000 to \$403,000. Surely the Foreign Mission Board in behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention was doing "big business" for the Lord. How many more letters had to be written to missionaries longing for counsel and encouragement; how much time and thought must be given to the arrangements for sending out new missionaries; how many important and perplexing questions arose in connection with the work; how much more complex was the financing of the enlarged work with its many newly developed phases—especially difficult since the larger part of the contributions were received during the last few months of the fiscal year, and the increased expenses of the work necessitated larger loans and greater interest; how many

articles must be written for religious papers. How many more calls for a Secretary to visit churches, associations, colleges, and conventions. Two Secretaries could not carry on the work as it should be done and in the manner in which Southern Baptists wished.

In 1903, the Southern Baptist Convention, mindful of a large area of territory occupied by its constituency, requested the Home, Foreign, and Sunday School Boards to consider the advisability of placing a Secretary beyond the Mississippi River who should represent all interests of the Convention in that section. Dr. M. P. Hunt, of St. Joseph, Missouri, was elected by the three Boards as Trans-Mississippi Secretary. He began his new work January 1, 1904, and, for almost two years, ably filled this position.

In 1905 the Board, realizing that the work in the office was exceedingly heavy, elected Mr. R. R. Gwathmey, a consecrated and efficient layman of Richmond, as office assistant. Five years later, after the death of Mr. T. C. Williams, he was made Treasurer of the Board.

On January 1, 1906, Dr. Bomar left the services of the Board, having suffered a physical break-down several months before. The Board at this time recommended that in addition to Dr. Bomar's successor another Secretary should be elected. The committee on the nomination of two assistants dwelt at length upon the growth of the work; upon the necessity of educating the churches in regular giving; upon the need of more systematic work among colleges and universities; upon the multiplying agencies in Christian work, the rapidly increasing organizations among young people and women, and the necessity of the Board keeping in touch with these, and the lack of adequate machinery for this tremendous undertaking.

Dr. W. H. Smith, of the First Church in Columbus, Georgia, was elected Dr. Bomar's successor and began his new work January 22, 1906. Dr. Smith had done an excel-

lent work in the pastorate and was one of the recognized educational and missionary leaders of Georgia, figuring prominently in Foreign Mission discussions in the Georgia Convention and in the Southern Baptist Convention. In January, 1907, Dr. Smith's position was changed from that of Assistant Secretary to that of Editorial Secretary, the duties of which were to include the visiting of churches and conventions; the editing of tracts and the *Foreign Mission Journal*; the preparation of articles for religious papers; and other important duties. The election of the additional secretary was postponed until the proper man could be found.

In the meantime, an offer was made to the Board which proved to be a solution of the problem confronting them of interesting the young people of the South in missions. A brother whose name was withheld made a generous offer to the Board. Stating that his object was to induce the young people of the South to consider missions as a life-work, to secure trained leaders and an intelligent church membership, he offered to pay for three years the salary of a man who should promote the study of missions in the Sunday Schools, Young People's Unions, and among other young people connected with the church. The chief method was to be the organization of Mission Study classes, a phase of the work hitherto undeveloped. Dr. T. B. Ray, pastor of the Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee, was chosen as the man to fill the position of Educational Secretary made possible by this offer. Dr. Ray began his new duties November 1, 1906. He was thoroughly conversant with young peoples' work, having been active in this work during his college and Seminary courses. During his pastorate, he had served on several Boards, among them the city, associational, and state mission boards, and for several years he had been president of the Baptist Young People's Union of Tennessee. In his own church he

had been most successful in work among the young people. In addition to his other duties, Dr. Ray was also put in charge of the Book Department of the Foreign Mission Rooms, a branch of the work which had been started in 1904 with the small beginning of twenty-five or thirty books and had rapidly grown in popularity. Dr. Ray entered upon his new duties with zeal and enthusiasm, and under his management the new departments of the work rapidly developed.

More than a year after Dr. Smith became Secretary, Dr. S. J. Porter, pastor of Olive Street Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri, was elected Field Secretary. He entered upon his new duties March 1, 1907. Dr. Porter had formerly been a missionary to Brazil and was thoroughly missionary in spirit. He was an excellent speaker and had proved a most successful pastor and missionary leader. His duties were to consist mainly in visiting conventions and other missionary gatherings, and developing in every way possible interest among churches. An increased secretarial force was in the Foreign Mission Rooms—a force ready to meet the many demands of the enlarged work with its many new phases; ready also to press forward to greater achievements.

Several times during these years Dr. Willingham was approached in regard to accepting pastorates of large and influential churches. He always replied that, though he loved the pastorate, he felt that he had been called to his present work. In 1906 the trustees of the University of Georgia sought him as Chancellor of that institution. Leading men of the state wrote to him and conferred with him personally upon the subject. It was indeed an honor to be offered the Chancellorship of this institution, his Alma Mater, and he realized that a wide field of usefulness would be his should he accept. He was compelled to answer, however, that his heart was in his work and that as long as his brethren wished him to continue in it he would do so.

In 1906, for the first time in nine years, the books of the Board closed with a debt. In debt! What did that mean? Simply that papers in the bank must be met? No. It meant sorrow and disappointment and perplexity to the Secretary, who had sent out appeal after appeal and had gone all over the bounds of the Convention trying to stir his brethren to do their duty. It meant disappointment and delay to the sixteen young men and women who were hoping soon to be sent to the foreign field. Several of them were to graduate from the Seminary in May after having spent several years in preparation for their work. What of their thwarted plans?

During the following year there was much earnest praying, wise planning, and faithful laboring that the debt might be liquidated. As the fiscal year drew to a close, missionaries on the foreign field and workers in this country anxiously awaited the results. Finally April 30 dawned. A description of this day is taken from the *Foreign Mission Journal*:

“All day long the tide of letters and telegrams poured in, many of them breathing a prayer for ‘victory.’ Nothing like it has ever been seen in the rooms before. Everyone was kept intensely busy. At nightfall there came a lull, during which there was a season of united, earnest pleading with God that all might be well.

“At 11 o’clock there was a short time of suspense. About \$20,000 was still needed to pay all debts. All the states had been heard from except Texas. What will Texas do? How eagerly we waited for the telegram! Surely this great Baptist Empire will not fail us! Just about 12 o’clock the message came: ‘Draw on me for \$35,000. J. B. Gambrell.’ Thank God for Texas! That message saves the day.

“Already in faith, the cable messages for our faithful workers at the front had been prepared and immediately the word ‘Victory’ was flashed around the world. Telegrams were sent to the editors of the religious papers and the news was given to the daily press. The first day of May

dawned with rejoicing all over the earth, and we believe there was great joy in heaven.”

1907 brought other important events. In May the Southern Baptist Convention met in Richmond. It was a great pleasure to the Secretary to welcome the Convention to his home city; to extend the courtesies of the Foreign Mission Rooms to all who cared to visit them; and to entertain a large number of his Southern Baptist friends in his home.

This Convention was memorable for the launching of the Layman's Missionary Movement. This movement was presented by Hon. Joshua Levering and was enthusiastically entered into by Southern Baptists. During the following year, as a result of the efforts of the movement to get one hundred men from the different denominations to visit the mission fields and report to the people in the home-land the prevailing conditions, several Northern and Southern Baptists visited mission fields in the East, among whom were Messrs. J. Carter, Joshua Levering, and E. W. Stephens, of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In June, 1907, the degree of Doctor of Laws, LL.D., was conferred upon Dr. Willingham by Furman University.

In the fall of 1907, Dr. Willingham left for a visit to the Southern Baptist mission fields in the Orient. Such a trip had long been talked of by Southern Baptists. In 1905 he had been asked by the Board to visit the Italian Mission after which he should attend the World's Baptist Congress in London. He had not deemed such a trip expedient at this time, however. A resolution had been unanimously passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1906 asking him to visit, at the expense of the Board, Southern Baptist fields in the far East and any others he deemed practicable, at a time which seemed best to him and the Board. This trip had been indefinitely postponed as he did not consider it wise to leave the work during that year. Communications having been received by the Board from both mission-

aries and those in this country who urged that he should make this trip, he became convinced that the time had arrived when he must visit the workers and gain a first-hand knowledge of the fields; and, at the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, he reported that he expected to leave the following August or September. Dr. John L. White determined that Dr. Willingham should not make this long and, in many respects, arduous, trip alone, but that he should be accompanied by his wife; and, during the weeks following the Convention, he gathered from others who were interested a fund which was presented to Mrs. Willingham with the request that she accompany her husband. This beautiful act on the part of Dr. White and other friends was much appreciated by Dr. and Mrs. Willingham.

September 2 was the day set for the departure. It was not easy to break up a home in which there were several unmarried children, two of whom were small boys. It was not easy to make suitable arrangements in regard to a boarding house. It was not easy to see one's furniture stored away and one's house rented to strangers; it was not easy to think of the separation of several months, during which time many possible accidents might occur to those traveling and sickness and trouble to those at home. Arrangements were finally made, however, and everything was ready for the departure. Everyone attempted to be as cheerful as possible. As Edward, the little boy not eight years of age, sat by his mother during the last few minutes before the train pulled out, he tried to be brave; he uttered no word, but tears coursed down his cheeks. The remembrance of the tear-stained face of the little boy, held up by one of the older brothers to the window of the moving train a few moments later, often haunted the father during the months that followed and made him long for the time when he would be reunited with his loved ones.

A wonderful trip, however, was in store for the travelers and a great opportunity for aiding the cause. The Secretary's words of counsel and encouragement would mean much to the missionaries, and a first-hand knowledge of the conditions of the fields would enable him to direct the work more wisely and to furnish greater inspiration to those in the home-land.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### VISIT TO THE MISSION FIELDS.

BY MRS. R. J. WILLINGHAM.

Almost thirty-three years had passed since our first trip together—our bridal trip. Now Mr. Willingham and I were leaving loved ones a second time, but with what different feelings! Grown sons and daughters and younger ones, who still needed the shelter of home and the watch-care of father and mother, bade us good-bye. Often I had prayed for grace to say "Go" when my husband had to leave me—now the time had come when I, too, must go. We knew it would be no holiday trip, yet the "good of the work" seemed to demand it. We were indeed grateful to the kind friends and loved ones who made it possible for me to go. Together he and I enjoyed our journey, saw through each other's eyes, talked over things at the time and years afterwards, and were always better able to understand and sympathize with our beloved missionaries.

After a delightful trip across the continent we arrived at Seattle. In the harbor the great ship *Minnesota*, the largest on the Pacific, was awaiting us. Our stateroom was beautified by the lovely carnations and American Beauties sent by our dear friend, Dr. Lansing Burrows. It was interesting to watch the great crowd on the wharf. Someone on the shore started a song which was eagerly caught up by the crowd and voyagers. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" rang out, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" followed; then "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." It was a sweet goodbye.

Eighty-five missionaries were on board the great ship. We, with eight of our missionaries and two from the North-

ern Board, were seated at the "Baptist Table." Every morning at eleven in the spacious dining room, a devotional service was held by the missionaries, many of the other passengers joining with us. On Sunday morning, though the billows rolled, the room was filled and we had an impressive service. Mr. Willingham preached on "The Christian Hope."

Rapidly the days flew by; many pleasant friendships were formed. Lectures and concerts enlivened the evenings on board. Mr. Willingham was requested to lecture on "The Negro of the South From a Southern Man's Viewpoint." Though his audience was composed of people of every shade of political opinion, all seemed to enjoy his humor, pathos, and sensible views. Kodaks were much in evidence on the voyage; and many snap-shots were taken, among them, one of Mr. Willingham and Mr. William H. Taft, then Secretary of War, who was on his way to visit the Philippines and Russia. Some one, seeing the two men together, spoke of them as "Secretary of Peace" and "Secretary of War." All felt the invigorating effect of the long sea voyage. Mr. Willingham declared that he had never enjoyed an ocean voyage as much as this one; and truly this was the only *real* rest he had on the long trip.

After fifteen days we steamed into the harbor of Yokohama and caught our first view of the "Sunrise Kingdom." While reading letters of loving greetings from our missionaries, Dr. Parshley, of the Northern Board, came with cordial welcome to take us to his home on the Bluff. Through the customhouse we emerged for our first ride in a jinrikisha. How the little men puffed before we reached our destination—Mr. Willingham insisted on doubling the pay for his men; he claimed they had earned it! Mr. Willingham had been asked to preach Sunday morning at the Union Church, where many foreigners worship regularly. At the close of service, a gentleman came up to him and said, "Dr. Willingham, I must thank you for that gospel sermon. So

many ministers who visit Japan feel that they must give us learned discourses on the different religions of the world—they forget that we, of all people, need ‘the old, old story.’” Mr. Willingham was glad to have the opportunity to study the work carried on by our Northern brethren, of visiting their schools and places of worship and of speaking through an interpreter to the students of their Theological Seminary.

We spent a charming day in Tokyo. We found the city gaily decorated with flags and bunting and pictures of Mr. Taft, whose visit was soon expected. Many times during the day we were much amused at the bows and smiles lavished upon us by the Japanese, who mistook Mr. Willingham for the distinguished visitor. Through the beautiful parks and by the elegant homes of the diplomats and nobles we drove, but even more interesting than the Imperial Residence was our visit to a large Buddhist temple. With what feelings we saw for the first time men, women, and children bowing down and worshiping idols! It was heart-rending. Oh, that Christians might give them the gospel and teach them of our true God.

At Kobi we were met by our beloved Mr. McCollum, who gave us a royal welcome. He enjoyed showing us the beauties of Japan and telling of her wonderful people and our work among them. With him we made the journey to Fukuoka, where all of our missionaries were gathered for the mission meeting which was to be held at Mr. Dozier's home. Here our missionary son Calder and Bessie, his wife, had lived. Flowers they had planted still bloomed in the yard. We were glad to be with the dear friends who had been so kind to them during her illness. Mr. Willingham threw himself with enthusiasm into the conference, and with eagerness listened to the reports and discussions. Earnestly the missionaries pleaded for more workers, for means with which to build chapels and schools, and a home

for a theological seminary that they might lay broad foundations for a good work in Japan. It was a meeting of deep spirituality; again and again divine guidance was sought.

Mr. Willingham first spoke to a large congregation of Japanese at Kumamoto, where ten thousand students were attending the government schools. The commodious chapel was literally packed with eager listeners, and crowds stood outside. More than forty asked for prayer, and one student avowed his intention of giving himself to the ministry.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, who were located at this station, acted as our guides through Japan, thereby adding much to our comfort and enjoyment. We saw an inspiring sight at Kagoshima, our youngest station, when four thousand school children, each with a flag of Japan in one hand and the battle flag in the other, went through a wonderful drill. They were preparing for a visit from the Crown Prince. As Mr. Willingham watched the beautiful sight he exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, "Oh, that these young lives might be trained in spiritual things for the coming of the 'King of kings' and 'Lord of lords'!"

We enjoyed a novel sight of forty little children on their knees in Sunday school singing, "Bringing in the Sheaves" and "Whiter than Snow." That afternoon we went to the seashore where Mr. Bouldin baptized four converts. The young Japanese professor who so kindly interpreted Mr. Willingham's sermons during his stay here went with us. He was a Presbyterian and had never before witnessed an immersion; his comment was, "That is the natural way." We thought so, too!

The dedication of the attractive chapel at the great naval station, Sasebo, and the formal opening of the Theological School at Fukuoka were interesting occasions. Mr. Willingham was called on for an address at each place.

Anxious to study the needs of the field and becoming more and more convinced of the importance of the work as he saw conditions in Japan, Mr. Willingham visited each station, consulting the different missionaries in regard to their plans and ideals and encouraging them to press forward. No trip was too strenuous. Traveling by rail, boat, and boshu through beautiful Japan, bright with October flowers—in sight of their sacred Mt. Fuji or along the Inland Sea—he went cheerfully. Stopping for the night at a Japanese inn where he was compelled to sit, eat, and sleep on the floor was a new experience. He declared, "I am enjoying my visit immensely and am learning much."

We arrived in Nagasaki late at night. When, after a rough voyage of twenty-eight hours our belated boat stopped at the wharf, to our surprise we were met by Mr. Walne and a large number of church members. I was amused when one of the young men, in a spirit of mischief and with a smothered exclamation of wonder, slyly measured himself against Mr. Willingham's back, to the edification of his comrades. The memory of the songs of praise of the children around Mrs. Walne's breakfast table lingers with me yet. No one knows what object lessons these sweet homes of our missionaries are in foreign lands.

Our modest chapel and bookstore seemed small in comparison to the many heathen temples in this city. Yet the gospel is preached here and souls are being saved. Tracts, Bibles, and religious books are being distributed. All Japan is reading; shall we not give her the best Christian literature?

We were indebted for many kind and loving attentions to the Christians at every station as well as to our missionaries. With grateful hearts we prayed, "God bless Japan." Mr. Willingham writes:

"Where on earth can a man make his life count for more than in this great land!"

Was this really China we beheld from our steamer that bright October morning? It almost makes one dizzy to be transported in such quick succession from one country to another where manners, customs and people differ so materially; but the cordial welcome of our missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Peyton Stephens who met us at Chefoo, made us feel at home even in China. In the few pages allotted me it is impossible to describe in detail our journeys through this great empire as we traveled more than three thousand miles by boat, railroads, and shentzi, to even mention the names of all our workers, to tell of the delightful hospitality of all who entertained us, or to give an adequate description of the splendid work done by our missionaries individually. Only a few of the most vivid impressions and striking incidents can be mentioned.

During our stay of three months in China, we visited the North, Interior, Central, and South China Missions. Perhaps the reader can more easily visualize our journey if I liken the location of these four missions to the location of New York, Cincinnati, Norfolk, and Key West. From city to city we went, spending a few days in each. Mr. Willingham endeavored to see as much of the work as possible. He wanted to know conditions just as they were; he therefore visited every place occupied by our missionaries except Tengchow, where an epidemic of meningitis was raging. There were many phases of the work to be discussed, and he and the missionaries talked early and late; each man seemed to feel that *his* work was the most important and earnestly pleaded for workers and equipment. Of our stay in one of the stations Mr. Willingham wrote: "In the day time and until late at night it was go, go, go, see, see, see. We thought we were kept busy in America, and some said we came off to rest!"

After seeing our work in Chefoo, we caught the first boat to Laichowfu. In the early dawn a fleet of tiny Chinese

boats came out to meet our steamer. Mr. John Lowe and Mr. Glass were waving a welcome long before they came in hailing distance. All went well until within a hundred yards of the shore our sampan was stopped by a sand-bar. How to reach dry land was a question. On the back of a small Chinese coolie, Mr. Willingham, with his feet drawn up high to escape the water, was carried safely to shore. How we in the little boat laughed at the sight! My merriment was turned into dismay when it occurred to me that *I*, too, must land. Mr. Lowe and Mr. Glass quickly came to my rescue. Seated on a "Queen's Chair"—a quilt held tight between two coolies—I grasped their collars and rode out in state! Ten miles still lay between us and our destination. Stored away in the two shentzi which awaited us, we started on the novel and rough journey. Quickly tiring of this mode of travel, Mr. Willingham insisted that he "preferred to walk with the brethren." There was much to see and he was interested in it all—many questions were asked and answered. Of this walk Mr. Glass writes:

"One little incident occurred that morning as we walked through a village together on our way from the sea to Laichowfu, that showed the depth of his interest in the missionary's message and the salvation of the people: Passing under a large tree in the village, I said: 'Dr. Willingham, this is one of my pulpits.' 'What?' said he, 'have you preached here under this tree?' 'More than once,' I replied. Then grasping my hand, he exclaimed, fervently, 'God bless your messages, my brother, and save the people of this place.'"

Mr. Willingham's first talk to the Chinese was made before the Woman's Training School in this city. For several days he studied the needs of this station.

Mr. Willingham's first Sunday in this great Empire was spent at Pingtu. Rising early Saturday morning, he and two missionaries with a small pony and bicycle had started off on their trip of more than thirty miles over the hills to

Pingtu. He was struck by the interest of the Christians here. By six o'clock Sunday morning men and women from the neighboring villages were coming into services, many of whom had walked five or six miles, and some twenty-three. He was deeply touched when he heard the dear old hymns, "Come Humble Sinner" and "From Greenland's Icy Mountain," sung so earnestly by converts in far-off China.

On a memorable journey of sixty miles, in a procession of six shentzi, a cart, a bicycle, and a donkey, ten of us traveled a day and a half on our way to the mission meeting held in Hwanghaien. We thus gained, as would have been possible in no other way, an insight into the life of the Chinese, and became acquainted with the discomforts experienced by our missionaries in their modes of travel and entertainment at Chinese inns. Along this road, used for ages, there were many people traveling—we passed the patient farmers at work with their old-fashioned implements, went through villages, saw their women and girls hobbling along on their poor little feet—their stupid faces telling of their deep ignorance and loveless lives. We could see and feel their need of the gospel—how it hung over our hearts like a pall! With interest, we listened as the missionaries told of their work among them—of souls saved and lives changed. Sometimes a crowd would gather as we paused to rest, thus affording the missionaries an opportunity to preach to them and tell them of the true God and life beyond. On one of these occasions an old man exclaimed earnestly, "And do you mean to tell me there *is* a way for me to depart in peace?" Lovingly Mr. Lowe tried to explain to him "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

We were welcomed to Hwanghaien by Dr. Hartwell, that veteran missionary who had given more than fifty years of his life in working among the Chinese. Mr. Willingham was much interested in the Boys and Girls' School and



the Bush Theological Seminary, an institution which was especially dear to him. A handsome new chapel was dedicated on Sunday. On this occasion Mr. Willingham preached from the text, "In the name of our God we will set up our banners." Dr. Pruitt interpreted this sermon to a crowd of five hundred Chinese, many of whom had never heard the Gospel before. In the afternoon we saw twelve natives baptized, one of whom had walked eighty miles that he might be immersed. The next day a business man sent for a Testament that he might learn more of the "Jesus doctrine" of which he was hearing so much.

Our first visit to a hospital in a heathen land was to the Warren Memorial Hospital in charge of Ayers. Two native doctors who had been trained by him were his assistants in his daily ministrations to the sick and suffering. We could but be impressed by the work done by our medical missionaries, and the wonderful opportunities which are offered them.

We were also impressed with the sincerity of the Chinese Christians, many of whom suffer trials and persecutions upon turning to Christianity. Mr. Willingham met men who had been cruelly beaten during the Boxer uprising, and who still bore on their bodies marks of their suffering.

The Chinese were much pleased with Mr. Willingham; they considered him "beautiful" on account of his size, and called him the "Old Pastor"—the most complimentary term they could apply. They were most grateful and appreciative, thanking us over and over again for "giving them the gospel." Reproachfully Mr. Willingham would say, "How long and slow we have been in giving them the Bread of Life."

I can never forget our leave-taking of our friends of North China. Dr. Hartwell, on his faithful donkey, and Dr. Pruitt and one hundred Christians on foot escorted us a distance of a mile from Hwanghien. As we finally stopped

to say farewell, they stepped in front of Mr. Willingham's shentza and sang, "Hallelujah, 'Tis Done, I Believe on the Son." It was some moments before Mr. Willingham could control his emotions enough to speak. When he did, he asked Dr. Hartwell to interpret for him. At the close of his tender parting message, he prayed with the Chinese—a thing he had not before attempted. "Oh, Lord," he petitioned, "Thou art God, and there is none beside Thee. We do not have to worship the sun, the moon, the stars, or anything Thou hast created. We thank Thee, O God, for the privilege of meeting these whom Thou hast saved. Lord, bless these missionaries who have come. Lord, bless these Chinese pastors and evangelists. Lord, let Thy blessing rest upon these friends from the least to the greatest. We pray Thee, Lord Jesus, to bless these as they go out to witness for Thee. Lord, we shall never meet again here. Father, keep each one of these Thy servants. Guide and bless each one that he may serve Thee to the end. Hallelujah!" The Christians joined in the "Amen" and then sang "We praise Thee, O God." As we rode away, the brethren with trembling voices sang, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

Our ride of thirteen miles to the seashore was saddened by the sight of hundreds of Chinese worshiping at the graves of their ancestors, for it was a special day with them. Small tables with dishes heaped with good food were placed before these graves and left for the spirits (or dogs) to eat.

To our surprise we found that two of the native pastors had walked all the way from Hwanghien to bid us a last farewell. Mr. Willingham writes: "Sweet and tender was that last meeting in the twilight on the seashore, as the boat lights glimmered over the waves—for us to stand and pray and bid farewell; and then one of these men started in soft refrain, 'Hallelujah 'Tis Done, I Believe on the Son.' God bless North China. . . . I feel humbled

before God and want to do more to let these people know of His love.”

We started on our long journey to Interior China, Mr. Lowe accompanying us on the voyage across the Gulf of Pechili. We were ready for a rest on deck that bright and balmy day. In the afternoon, as Mr. Willingham stood by Mr. Lowe, who was preaching to a large crowd of Chinese gathered round him, the north wind struck our boat. Instantly we were in the grasp of a terrific storm on this most treacherous of waters. The Chinese disappeared as if by magic, while we clung to railings or whatever support we could find. Limp and pale, we finally reached our state-rooms, to remain there for hours. It was a serious time—I for one buried there whatever grievances I might have had. Each prayer for my children I thought my last. At every turn of the vessel we expected to be sent to a watery grave. At last we anchored and woke next morning to find ourselves before Port Arthur.

After three more days of travel on sea and land, we reached our Interior China Missions. I wish I might portray Mr. Willingham as he traveled on boats and trains, trying to “catch up” with letters to the *Journal* and religious papers at home that he might lay upon the hearts of Southern Baptists the weight of the work as he saw it, seeing the needs, at the same time the encouragements of our workers at Chingkiang, Yangchow, and Soochow, listening to the pleadings of the missionaries as they pointed out how re-enforcements and money at that time would mean immediate advance, and how delay would cripple the work and opportunities slip away. He had the right word for each one—appreciation of the years of labor for those who had faithfully sown the seed, and cheery encouragement for the younger ones who were still struggling with the difficulties of the language. Always ready to speak and preach, anxious to meet the men and women who had been won

to Christ, yet with his own heart weighted down with the doom of the lost, how powerless he felt—he could only pour out his heart before God.

Thanksgiving found us with our workers at Chingkiang, the Crockers and McReas, on our way to visit the celebrated Golden Pagoda. Up the many steps to the very top we climbed. We gazed with admiration at the scene below us—the crowded city, our modest church and mission homes, the great Yangste river and the Grand Canal. Baring his head, Mr. Willingham started that grand old hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

A native of this city who had given up his inheritance to become a Christian brought Mr. Willingham a beautiful red scroll upon which was inscribed in gilt letters, "God is love. Love one another—this is the great commandment. Love." Other scrolls similar to those which adorn the homes in China were given him by the natives. One was sent him after his return to Richmond. On the handsome piece of satin more than two yards in length were black Chinese letters which read, "Wherever you go there is transformation."

One of the natives in Yangchow traveled for two days on a donkey over unspeakable roads to invite brethren to hear Mr. Willingham preach. In Soochow Mr. Willingham was amused, yet saddened, when Mrs. McDaniel pointed out two bright little pupils in her girls' school. They were really boys, but their parents fearing that the devil might harm them if he knew they were boys, were trying to deceive him by dressing them as girls.

We were warmly welcomed by our missionaries in Shanghai. How much they did for our comfort and enjoyment those short six days we were with them. Through Dr. Bryan's wise management, property in the old section of the city had been sold advantageously and three comfortable residences built in the western part, where we were

domiciled in his dear home. His enthusiasm was contagious as he told how he *must have* a church on this part of the land, a girls' school on that, and a boys' academy on still another. Sunday morning found us worshipping at the Old North Gate Church. With peculiar pleasure Mr. Willingham stood in the pulpit so long filled by Dr. Yates. His sermon was interpreted to the large native congregation by Dr. Bryan.

There was much to see and do in this great city, the New York of the East and our strongest station in Central China. Speaking at the churches and Cantonese Sunday School, talking to the Bible Women at the Training School, to the girls of the Boarding School, and the boys of the Academy, and meeting the evangelists and workers, Mr. Willingham was kept busy. After a brisk ride one cold morning he spoke before the students of the College and Theological Seminary owned jointly by the Northern and Southern Baptists, which is located about five miles down the river.

There were pleasant social occasions also, for of course Mr. Willingham must meet the friends of our missionaries, the honored missionaries of other denominations. We counted it a privilege to be in the home of Mrs. Seaman, the daughter of Dr. Yates, who has proven herself a true friend to all our missionaries and has given so liberally to our work. An elaborate feast was given in honor of Mr. Willingham by the native Christians. For more than two hours and a half we sat at the table partaking of the many courses. Sharks' fins, birds' nests, watermelon seeds, and other such dainties were served. All ate out of the same bowl, the master of ceremonies picking out choice bits with his chopsticks and passing them over to us, the guests of honor.

Standing on deck of our steamer as we left Central China, we passed our College and Seminary. On the shore

stood Dr. Bryan and a crowd of students. Mr. Willingham wrote of them, "There stood the noble missionary and great man waving us farewell—it was as though he said, 'I will stand here and try to do my duty cheerfully, but send us help, send us help.' We turned away with husky voice and tearful eyes, feeling, 'by God's grace, we will.'"

After a voyage of several days we reached Canton. This is the oldest, best equipped and strongest mission station of Southern Baptists. We received a gracious welcome from all of our missionaries—from dear Dr. Graves who had been here for more than fifty years to Mr. Anderson who crossed the Pacific with us three months before. For many years our missionaries had toiled on in this crowded, noisy city, the largest heathen city in the world. A few months before they had moved to this large compound located several miles from the city and were rejoicing in the better facilities. Mr. Willingham rejoiced with them—he knew how patiently they had waited for this new compound; he remembered their difficulties in getting land enough on which to build a well-equipped plant, and how slowly the money from the homeland had come in to pay for it. Now he could see for himself the homes, the chapel, the Girls' Boarding School, and, just a short distance away, the Graves' Theological Seminary. He rejoiced with them in seeing the years of prayer and hope and effort crowned with success. Now they were ready to press forward in the great work.

Mr. Willingham was much interested in the China Baptist Publication Society, of which our own missionary, Dr. R. E. Chambers, is Secretary. The worth of this society to the cause of Christ is inestimable. Thousands of tracts are published besides Bibles, hymn-books, periodicals, and other books, which are used by the Baptists of China and Chinese Baptists in all parts of the world.

We were interested in Mrs. Greene's Sunday School class of street children. A crowd of boys and girls listened attentively as she explained the large lesson picture. One girl of ten years while she sang and recited the lesson was compelled to walk about and shake her baby sister who was strapped to her back that she might keep her quiet. It was touching to hear these poor little creatures sing as they marched out, "I Am So Glad That Jesus Loves Me." Our missionaries sow the good seeds beside all waters.

As Mr. Willingham and two missionaries who were returning from a service in Canton one night stepped into a boat, they almost stumbled over a curious-looking bundle which proved to be a little girl about five years of age. The owners of the boat had recently bought her for ninety cents. They intended that later on she should become the wife of their son, who was then about eight years of age.

The native Christians of this city were most cordial to Mr. Willingham and honored him with a reception at the Independent Baptist Church. The large church was packed one midweek afternoon with church members, Bible women, and pupils from the different boys and girls' schools. There was an interesting program and refreshments for all. The pastor had once been a "table boy" in Dr. Simmons' home; now he preached to a large congregation. Other churches in this city were visited by Mr. Willingham, and addresses made and plans for the work discussed.

Making Canton headquarters, Mr. Willingham visited the three other stations of the South China Mission. Going up the North River to Yintak in the Hakka country was a perilous trip. I was not allowed to go. I found out afterward the reason—the river was infested with robbers, who in their little pirate boats would often attack other boats at night and quickly escape in the darkness. Mr. Willingham was much pleased with the sturdy Hakka race and our

work among them. It was refreshing to know that among this people the women have never bound their feet.

Up in the beautiful West River we went to visit the other two stations of this Mission. Reaching Shiu Hing at night, with lantern to guide us, we went inside the city walls. At every doorstep on either side the narrow street the sticks of burning incense cast a wierd light. Was this worship or fear of evil spirits? How they need the True Light! Mr. Willingham greatly appreciated an invitation to the home of a wealthy native physician, a fine Christian man. His wife and daughter received him graciously and he was shown over the house that he might see how a Chinese home is furnished.

Mr. Willingham was much interested in going over the John Stout Memorial Hospital with Dr. Meadows and Dr. Hayes. This hospital has been of great help to Wuchow. Many patients come here and many of them leave ardent followers of the Great Physician.

At a reception given at the home of one of our missionaries in this city many Chinese Christians were present. One dear old lady with her daughter and granddaughter standing beside her introduced her little great-granddaughter to Mr. Willingham. With mingled pride and gratitude shining in her face she said, "This is the third generation that has never bowed the knee to idols." Mr. Willingham was interested to know that seventeen old temples in this city were being used for schools; in one of them we have a fine boys' school.

After our visit to these stations, we return to Canton accompanied by several of the missionaries who had planned to speak on Christmas at the compound, as the mission meeting was to be held there that week. Early Christmas morning we were awakened by sweet music—Miss Bostick and the girls from her school were singing Christmas carols beneath our windows. At twelve o'clock Mr. Willingham looked in



upon a happy scene as all of the children of the station, around Mrs. Graves' dining table, were served their Christmas dinner by the ladies of the Mission. Later we, seated at a long table on Mrs. Graves' wide front porch with twenty-eight of the missionaries, enjoyed our first and only Christmas dinner in China. The last Sunday in China we worshiped in the First Church where Dr. Graves had preached for many years. Here Mr. Willingham preached that morning, Dr. Graves interpreting for him.

Our visit to China was almost over. I cannot leave this great country without mentioning some things that impressed us greatly. One was the homes of the missionaries, not only of China, but of those in Japan, and of Italy where we afterward visited. No one can tell what these homes mean, not only to the occasional guest, but to the missionaries themselves. Here only can sights and sounds, discordant notes and prying eyes, be shut out. Few in the homeland know the difficulties of getting proper homes for our missionaries away from the port cities. To do so, the missionary must be brick-maker, architect, and builder, and must have the patience of Job to superintend the inexperienced workmen, who work only when they choose. Mr. Willingham was especially anxious that our faithful workers should have comfortable homes—some he knew had suffered and even given up their lives for want of them, and even yet the need of them was pressing. A missionary took us to the native house he had occupied when he first moved his wife and two little ones to this place. The youngest child had sickened and died from living in it. As I looked at the three small rooms so different from our comfortable homes, I exclaimed, "My brother, your wife is a good woman to have lived in this place." With tears he said, "Mrs. Willingham, I wrote to the Board that unless they could give me a good home for my family I must leave the work."

Just after the morning meal is a sweet time in these homes. The little ones must be taught to worship God—this is their only chance to hear songs and prayers in their mother-tongue—with real joy they select the hymns. At the table the servants know that the tiniest girl must be served before even the honored male guest—a custom rather startling to Chinese. It is wonderful how much good these mothers accomplish outside of the home in directing the school work, aiding in traveling, visiting the homes of natives, and lending their moral support to every good work.

As the old year slipped away we made our preparations to leave China. With tender farewell to our faithful and beloved missionaries in Canton, we started on our long voyage to Singapore, where we were to embark for Burma.

How our hearts thrilled as we neared the shores of Burma, the land where Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson gave their lives for Christ. Two delightful days were spent in the home of Dr. D. A. R. Smith, of the American Baptist Missionary Union. We felt especially near to him as he had married one of my cousins. Mr. Willingham spoke to the students of both the Karen and Burmese Theological Seminaries located near Rangoon, and also addressed several hundred students at the Burmese College. Many Karens have been won to Christ, but the Burmese are slow in turning from the teachings of Buddha. He also visited the large plant of the Baptist Mission Press, which still publishes the Bible as translated by Judson.

Again taking a boat, we sailed for India. We were kindly received at Calcutta by Mr. and Mrs. Harvey, English Baptist missionaries. Mr. Harvey is in charge of the large Baptist publishing plant here. Mr. Willingham was called on to speak to a class of Bible women who visit and teach in the homes of their secluded sisters; he also made a talk before the girls' school here. On Sunday morning we worshipped in the church built by Carey; we saw his old pulpit

and the communion set given him by the English College. The pool in which he and his wife and Luther Rice were baptized interested Mr. Willingham so much that he asked the privilege of going down in it. Going to Serampore, fifteen miles away, he visited Carey's church, and college, and the home in which he had lived and died; with reverence he stood beside the grave of the great man who had done so much to carry out the Great Commission.

It was at Benares, the Sacred City of the Hindoos, that we saw heathenism in its darkest forms—words cannot describe it. At no place in our travels was Mr. Willingham so oppressed by the awful condition of the heathen world. Woman's condition in India is heart-rending. As our journey took us to Agra, we stopped there to see that "dream in marble," the Taj Mahal, the most beautiful tomb in all the world. For many years I had known Mr. Willingham's love and consideration for *our* missionaries—on this trip through India his love for *all* missionaries repeatedly impressed me; even hunting up the obscure ones, he would talk over the great work with them, cheer them with his own strong faith, and take their needs to the throne of grace.

Leaving India, we crossed the Indian Ocean and passed through the Red Sea and Suez Canal on our way to Palestine. Seldom is Mt. Sinai seen by travelers as they pass it. Fortunately for us, the day on which we passed was bright and beautiful. Mr. Willingham, with Bible in hand, sat beside me on deck and read aloud from Exodus the account of the giving of the law. Fearing the Captain might forget his promise to call him, Mr. Willingham grew restless and walked the deck as a gentle reminder. Finally about eleven o'clock the Captain beckoned him and pointed out the sacred Mount. With enthusiasm Mr. Willingham gathered a crowd of missionaries and fellow-travelers about him and showed it to them. Again, he sat down and read from God's Book the first commandment and looked on the mountain.

Seventeen years before Mr. Willingham had visited Palestine—this time it was a “side trip” for him, but nevertheless one which we both enjoyed. I can never forget that week in Jerusalem and near-by places. Together we stood on the Mount of Olives, walked, and talked, and read again “the Sweet Story of Old”—ever since, the Bible has been a new book to me.

Another long voyage brought us into the beautiful Bay of Naples. Dr. Whittinghill, of Rome, and Dr. W. O. Carver, who was visiting Italy, met us—how glad we were to see some of our “very own” people again. Sunday morning found us attending Sunday School and church services at Naples. Both Mr. Willingham and Dr. Carver spoke—Dr. Whittinghill interpreting. This is our only place of worship in this large city—surely we should enlarge our work here. Taking an electric car that afternoon, we attended two other services in the towns of Boscoreale and Boscotrecase. The Italians were most kind and cordial to us. It was hard for me to conceal a smile as some of the good brethren would heartily kiss Mr. Willingham first on one cheek and then on the other.

Wishing Mr. Willingham to see the work of our Mission stations in Southern Italy, Dr. Whittinghill had arranged to go with him while I was to spend the time in Rome with Dr. Carver and his family. It is from Southern Italy that most of the immigrants to America come. Many of the people are very poor and have had few religious advantages. At one time our missionaries were sometimes roughly treated when trying to gain a footing here; but, happily, that period has passed. Good congregations greeted Dr. Whittinghill and Mr. Willingham as they went from place to place. The brethren on one occasion wished to honor them by meeting them at the entrance of the city with a band of music, but this attention was declined. After a sermon by Mr. Willingham at one of these places many asked for prayer; among

the number were several Catholics who had never heard a Protestant sermon before. Mr. Willingham was deeply stirred by the superstition and spiritual needs of the people and longed to send them help. There are peculiar difficulties connected with our work in Italy. The magnificent cathedrals and showy worship appeal to the Italian temperament. Prejudice of the people has prevented our being able to purchase land on prominent streets, and our small churches do not impress them favorably.

In Rome, we had two good services on Sunday, Mr. Willingham preaching and Dr. Whittinghill interpreting the messages. Dr. Whittinghill had done a splendid work in our Theological Seminary, of which he had had charge since its beginning. The pastors of ten of our thirty-five churches had received their training there. Mr. Willingham was much interested in looking with Dr. Whittinghill at various lots, hoping to secure better equipment for the church and Seminary.

It was a real pleasure to be in Mrs. Whittinghill's home and to meet again Miss Mary Taylor, her sister; their father, Dr. Taylor, so long the leader of our Italian mission, had died but a few months before. Dr. Gill and family were in America on account of serious sickness. Dr. Whittinghill was kind enough to go with us to our stations at Florence, Venice, and Milan. He and Mr. Willingham had long discussions of the work, while I enjoyed the beautiful scenery and blue sky from the window of the flying train. Mr. Willingham gained much information and was hopeful of the future of our work among the wonderful people of this great nation. If only the gospel in its simplicity could be preached how much greater she would be.

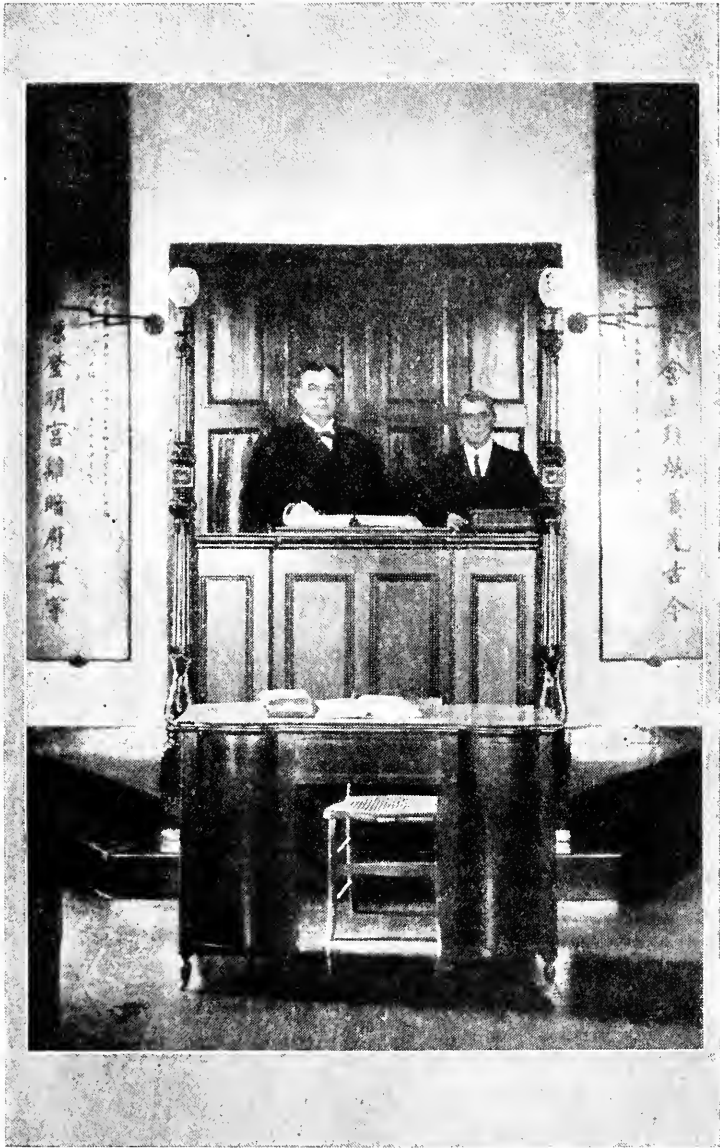
Leaving Milan we went to Paris, where Dr. H. P. McCormick, who had formerly been one of our missionaries to Mexico, made our stay in this beautiful city most pleasant. We were glad to attend a Baptist prayer-meeting with him.

In London, to our surprise, our new missionaries to Africa, Dr. and Mrs. McLean, a bridal couple, were stopping just across the street from our hotel. We greeted them gladly, and much enjoyed our few days together.

Mr. and Mrs. Pinnock and Mrs. Lumbley, our missionaries to Africa, who were home on furlough, came down to Southampton to see us before we left for America. Though we had not visited our African missions, we thus had an opportunity of meeting and knowing our beloved missionaries.

Six days of March weather on the Atlantic brought us in sight of New York. It was hard to believe that our long journey was at an end. We were grateful indeed for the many blessings that had followed us all the way and we rejoiced to see our native shores once more.

Having caught a new vision of the world's needs, Mr. Willingham returned to the home-land with renewed consecration and a greater passion for Foreign Missions.



DR. WILLINGHAM AND DR. R. J. BRYAN IN DR. YATES' PULPIT, NORTH GATE BAPTIST CHURCH, SHANGHAI, CHINA.





## CHAPTER XX.

### AN ENLARGED VISION.

On the steps of the coach ready to jump off at the first moment possible, Dr. Willingham was seen in the distance by the little party eagerly awaiting his arrival at Elba Station as the early morning train from New York approached. What a happy reunion took place that beautiful April morning in 1908, and what fervent expressions of thanksgiving were poured forth by the grateful father as he and his loved ones knelt to praise God for His many mercies during the long separation. The following day he was in the Foreign Mission Rooms ready to take up the threads once more. Allowing no time for recovery from the fatigue of the seven months' travel, he immediately threw himself into the work. Engagements had been made for him to speak in several places, and the next week found him on a trip to Kentucky. Hardly had he returned before it was necessary to prepare for the Southern Baptist Convention which was to be held in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

A mass-meeting on Foreign Missions was held on Saturday night of the Convention. A large and enthusiastic audience was present to hear R. J. Willingham tell of the work as he had seen it on the foreign field. Dr. Willingham rose and, as was his custom, led the people in prayer. At the conclusion of the prayer the audience, at the suggestion of Dr. Battle, was about to rise and give him the Chautauqua salute, but a shake of his head and a motion of his hand compelled them to remain seated.

"I don't want that, brother," he said to Dr. Battle. "If you have any appreciation, tell it to God. You lead us in prayer."

"How hard it is for a great man to decline the honors of his brethren," writes the *Christian Index*, in referring to this. "This kind of a spirit will conquer the world and give all the glory to Him who alone deserves it."

And how earnestly did he speak of the work. After hearing him, Dr. Bell remarked to his wife:

"I believe it has been too much for Bob; he has taken the whole heathen world on his heart!"

After the Georgia Convention the *Christian Index* writes:

"And then Dr. Willingham spoke as one who had seen with a new vision the workings of sin in men. He felt the inexpressible horror of it all as he had beheld it all in heathen lands. It seemed to us as we listened to him evident that this great soul had entered anew into the sufferings of Christ for sinners, and only the vision of the Christ, the risen and reigning Jesus, could give him hope and cheer and courage in view of the awful things which he had looked upon."

As the Secretary visited churches and conventions and told of the work in the heathen world, the souls of men were stirred within them; as he pictured the toil, sacrifice, and devotion of the missionaries, and as he portrayed the darkness and degradation of heathendom, and as he impressed upon his hearers the need of the nations, young men and women felt constrained to offer themselves for service on the foreign field, and pastors and laymen arose to pledge greater missionary activity and larger gifts.

In the fall of 1908, one of the greatest sorrows of his life befell him. While attending a political mass-meeting he was startled by the announcement made from the platform that he was wished in the lobby. Fearful that sad news concerning his brother Calder, who had been sick for several days, awaited him, he hurried out to find a telegram

announcing the critical condition of his brother. Anticipating the result, he immediately left for Macon, but was not able to reach his bedside before his death. It is indeed difficult to describe the relations which existed between C. B. and R. J. Willingham. With only two years' difference in their ages, baptized on the same day, ordained on the same day—one to the deaconate, the other to the ministry, they both put "first the kingdom of God." C. B. was a successful business man and was able to accumulate money which he consecrated to the Lord. Many worthy causes found him a generous contributor, but the education of young men and Foreign Missions were his specialties. Many men throughout the South who now hold influential positions were aided in their college careers by him; many preachers can testify of his generous financial aid during their days of preparation. The money thus invested he would sometimes assure them was not his, but the Lord's. And how he loved Foreign Missions, and how generously he contributed to the cause. How he loved the Secretary, perhaps no other among men understanding him so well! His letters to him were indeed "love-letters." And R. J. reciprocated the affection. The very manner in which he said, "Brother Calder" revealed the devotion which he lavished upon him. When he returned from the funeral it was evident that a large part of his life had been taken away, and that the world would never be exactly the same to him. R. J. Willingham was a manly man and a cheerful man; but, though often silently, he sorrowed deeply.

It is not at all strange that in the fall of 1908, Dr. Willingham's health became impaired. Fourteen years of indefatigable and enthusiastic labor had told upon his constitution before he made the visit to the mission stations. This visit, though delightful in many respects, was at the same time physically fatiguing and, because of the blackness of heathenism and the great needs of the work—so many of

which the Board was unable to supply—spiritually wearing. The trip had been followed by strenuous efforts and by the death of the person who, next to his wife and children, was dearest in all the world to him. In November his physician advised him that he must “hold up,” frankly informing him that it was largely in his own power to determine whether he would live fifteen days or fifteen years. Compelled by this startling news to consider his health, he promised his family, who were thoroughly alarmed, that he would “take things easy.” He could not long be detained from his work, however, and December found him traveling again. The precarious condition of his eldest brother Tom, who died the following May, also added to his anxiety at this time. Physical endurance, even though backed by indomitable will-power, has its limitations; finally Dr. Willingham’s overworn body could stand the strain no longer, and in February, 1909, he was compelled to give up. For about two weeks he was confined to his room. He now began to realize that his constitution was not what it once was and that his health must be carefully guarded; that though he could still do a great work, his efforts must be less strenuous than formerly.

For months, though he continued at his post, he carefully sought to regain health, lightening his work in the office and traveling much less than formerly. Even after his health was in a large measure restored, he endeavored to conserve it by heeding the protests of his friends against overwork. According to the custom which prevails in many Richmond offices, he took Saturday afternoon holiday; he rested longer after the midday meal each day; and he traveled less frequently than formerly, usually declining to speak more than twice on the same day while on his trips. In September of this year Dr. R. H. Pitt writes in the *Religious Herald*:

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“While we are thinking of anniversaries of one sort and another, attention may be suitably drawn to the fact that on the 1st of September, this year, Dr. Willingham began his seventeenth year of service as Secretary of our Foreign Board. We have been close to him in every way during those busy and fruitful years. Our gracious God never gave to Southern Baptists a finer spirit. He is heart and soul in his work. The burden he has carried can never be described, and the joy he has experienced as he has seen the great cause of which he is the impersonation grow at home and abroad, he himself can never tell. But these tremendous experiences have somewhat affected his physical strength, and several months ago we were all anxious about him. He is stronger now, and if he can be kept within bounds, his valuable life may be spared to us for years to come. No man among us is more surely established in the hearts of quite so many of our Southern people. He finds it hard to limit himself in his work. The fact is that the work itself has grown so greatly, it has so many aspects and involves so many different questions, that it is almost impossible for a man of Dr. Willingham’s temperament to keep away from it, even for a brief season. Somehow or other we must order him away for a little while.”

Dr. Willingham never consented to be “ordered away for a little while,” but by 1910 his health was very much improved.

During this year Dr. Smith and Dr. Porter were sent as delegates to the Ecumenical Conference in Edinburg, Scotland, after which they visited the Mission fields of the Board in Italy. Dr. Ray also visited South America that he might study the work of the various missions of the Southern Baptist Convention on that continent.

The panic of 1907, which occurred during Dr. Willingham’s visit to the mission fields, affected the receipts of the

Foreign Mission Board; but, due to Dr. Smith's wise management of the financial affairs, the books were closed at the end of the fiscal year without debt. In spite of wise management and strenuous efforts, however, 1909 found an indebtedness of \$31,000. This debt was destined to increase and was never lifted during Dr. Willingham's lifetime. In connection with the debt, mention must be made of the enlargement of the work in China in 1910—enlargement which created additional expense but for which there was no corresponding increase in revenues. Eight missionaries of the Bible Mission had in 1909 applied to be appointed missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board. The founder of the Bible Mission was Rev. S. C. Todd, who several years before had applied to the Foreign Mission Board. Mr. Todd was a splendid man and the Board had carefully considered his application, but, on account of certain beliefs held by him in regard to healing, had deemed it unwise to appoint him. Feeling called to China, however, he had established an independent mission at Macao. His years of service were cut short by early death, after which the remaining missionaries applied to the Board. The opportunity to secure an equipped station, manned by men and women conversant with the Chinese language and customs, thoroughly in sympathy with the Board, was too promising to be declined, and the missionaries were appointed January 1, 1910. During the same year, five missionaries of the Gospel Mission applied to the Board and were accepted.

A generous and far-sighted man who did not live within the bounds of the Southern Baptist Convention—"the brother from Pennsylvania," as he was usually referred to—made an offer to Southern Baptists during the early months of 1910. If they should succeed in getting out of debt by the end of the fiscal year, he promised to pay the outfitting, transportation and first year's salary of all missionaries

accepted by the Board up to sixty. This offer meant a gift of \$20,000. Dr. Willingham and his co-laborers made earnest efforts to lift the debt during the few remaining months, but in vain. The generous friend, however, in spite of the failure of Southern Baptists to meet the first condition of his former offer, now offered to pay the expenses of ten new missionaries if the Board would send out thirty during the next year, a condition which was met by Southern Baptists.

The influence of the debt was felt in the Southern Baptist Convention that year. The *Christian Index* writes:

“Secretary R. J. Willingham referred to the missionaries on the platform, and in that connection stated that personally he had no debt, and that the debt of the Foreign Board was not his debt, except as he was related to the rest of the brethren. He said that the debt was indeed burdensome, but not half so burdensome as the needs on the field. As he spoke of these things the form of the great man shook with emotion.”

The usual order to advance was not brought in by the Apportionment Committee. The result of the report of this committee is told by the *Christian Index*:

“At the close of Brother Sallee’s address, Secretary Willingham took the floor, and when he reported that the \$600,000 asked for, if raised, would mean no advance for the next conventional year, he seemed crushed. He stood there like a heart-broken hero. There was a strange feeling that pervaded the audience. C. C. Carroll, Kentucky, came to the platform and made one of those old-fashioned impromptu addresses. He said if we left this Convention with no provision for that debt of \$90,000, that it was an acknowledgment that we are whipped. As soon as he resumed his seat, a half dozen or more were clamoring for the floor. J. L. Gross, Texas, was recognized. He said he was willing to abide the judgment of the Apportionment Committee that no collection be taken, but that he was sure if a collection broke out, and came of the Lord, that the Committee would acquiesce.

“In the midst of proposed amendments to the report of the Apportionment Committee and ways and means for liquidating the debt on the Foreign Mission Board, there was a clamor for a collection. Finally a motion was passed that J. L. Gross be given the floor to take the collection, and then the mightiest battle ever waged in the Southern Baptist Convention was on. Money came in sums from five thousand dollars down to a single dollar, as extra to the amount requested by the Apportionment Committee. A young cripple asked the privilege of giving five dollars and of sending up twenty dollars later, which he declared he would do if he had to mortgage his typewriter to get the money. A brother in the audience stated that he would cover that gift and give one hundred dollars additional. \* \* \* And thus the collection went on until midnight or past, and in the midst of great joy and enthusiasm over the raising of something like \$25,000 of the debt, the Convention adjourned until 9 a.m. Saturday.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE PASSING YEARS.

“What collateral can you offer?” This question was asked Dr. Willingham by a New York banker from whom he had been endeavoring to secure the loan of \$50,000. Financial conditions were somewhat straitened during the summer of 1911 and Dr. Willingham had been authorized by the Board to make a trip to New York to see if he could secure money from one of the banks of that city. While consulting the president of the large bank he was asked, “What collateral can you offer?” “Collateral!” he exclaimed; “better than government bonds—two million Southern Baptists back of me!” He secured the loan.

One by one the years rolled by. A detailed account of these years would seem like a repetition of much that has already been told. Pressing duties in the office; the solving of difficult financial problems; the appointing and sending out of new missionaries; the visiting of churches, missionary gatherings, and conventions; and similar duties occupied his time.

Like a heavy cloud the debt hung over the Board. Nobly he and his associates endeavored to lift it. How much thought, foresight, and planning is required for a work for which, in some instances, more than one-third of the necessary money comes in after five o'clock on the last day of the year! How much uncertainty is involved when a rainy Sunday in April may cut down the receipts thousands of dollars! How worrying to a man whose soul is in the work to see paid for one year's interest an amount sufficient to pay the salaries of twenty missionaries or more! In a few of the churches the budget system had been

adopted, giving promise of the time when contributions will flow into the treasury during the twelve months of the year; in the majority of them, however, the old method still prevailed. After supper on the last day of each fiscal year Dr. Smith and Dr. Ray, and perhaps their wives; Mr. Gwathmey, and Mr. George Sanders, the office assistant, would usually gather in Dr. Willingham's home to await the results of the telegrams, which were now telephoned to the house. As they discussed the work and its needs, partook of the light refreshments served by Mrs. Willingham, received the various telegrams, calculated, and wondered, the hours passed by until finally twelve o'clock announced the closing of the books. During these years the debt was not lifted and the Secretaries could rejoice only if it had been reduced during the year or if it was smaller than anticipated.

The biographer cannot dwell in detail upon the splendid work done by Dr. Willingham's associates. The editorial work and many other phases of activity performed by Dr. Smith, the impetus given missionary education by Dr. Ray, in his wonderful development of the Mission Study Class and of a Southern Baptist missionary literature must be recounted by a historian of Southern Baptist Missions. Ever seeking to grasp the new opportunities which were constantly unfolding, the three secretaries pressed forward.

"If I were ten men I could keep them all busy for the next three or four months," writes Dr. Willingham after a long trip in 1911. "I wish that you would pray especially for me and the workers on the Board, that the Lord may give us strength and wisdom for His great work."

It was impossible for him to accept all of the many invitations to address churches, conventions, and missionary gatherings on account of other engagements and pressing duties in the office.

"How I wish that I could write and accept, but I am loaded down with work so that I hardly know what to do first," he writes to a correspondent.

Two important new phases of the work developed in 1912. The secretaries and the Board, wishing to place the responsibility of shaping the policies of the work, which had so greatly enlarged, more directly upon Southern Baptists, called a general Board meeting which was composed of the local Board and the vice-presidents of the various states. The first meeting was held January 17-18, 1912. So profitable did this meeting prove that it was decided that a similar meeting should be held each year. This first general meeting of the Board made an important decision in regard to the office of Field Secretary, which had remained vacant since the resignation of Dr. Porter, who, in 1910, accepted a call to the First Church of San Antonio, Texas. On account of the enlargement of the work, it was decided to have three Field Secretaries, two of whom should be located east of the Mississippi; the other, west. Later in the year Rev. C. J. Thompson was elected Secretary for the Eastern Division; Rev. C. D. Graves, for the Central; and Rev. C. C. Coleman, for the Western.

In 1910 Dr. Willingham was sent to convey the greetings of the Southern Baptists to the American Board of Commissioners who were celebrating their centennial anniversary in Boston. He was greatly interested in the inspiring meeting. He afterward said that this was the only occasion in his life when he had wished for a dress-suit. He enjoyed the trip to Andover and Bradford. It was a peculiar pleasure to see the house where Judson first met Ann Hasseltine; to witness the unveiling of the tablet which marked the spot to which the young men from Andover had repaired for their now famous "haystack" prayer-meetings, also the unveiling of the monument erected upon the site of the church in which Mr. and Mrs. Judson and others were set apart for mission work.

The following year he attended the Baptist World Alliance, which was held in Philadelphia. At this meeting which has been described as "a gathering of Baptists such as had never taken place before," were representatives from every country and clime, who had met to tell of their work, to counsel together, and to draw inspiration for greater achievements. Dr. Willingham was one of the speakers drawn from the Southern Baptist Convention. His subject was. "In the Christianizing of the World, What Co-operation Should We as Baptists Have in Foreign Mission Work?"

At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1912, Southern Baptists signalized the centennial of the beginning of American Foreign Missions by the launching of a great movement, the Judson Centennial Campaign. A million and a quarter dollars in addition to their regular gifts was to be raised within three years. One million dollars of this amount was to be devoted to the equipment and enlargement of the educational institutions on the foreign field (including publication interests); and a quarter of a million for general material equipment—for homes for missionaries, meeting houses, and hospitals. Dr. Ray was entrusted with the raising of this large sum; the wisdom of the committee's selection has been proved by the success which crowned Dr. Ray's efforts. With enthusiasm, Southern Baptists entered into this undertaking, which was to bring so much joy to the workers at the front and to furnish new opportunities for advancing the cause.

Often during his Secretaryship Dr. Willingham heard of attacks made against Foreign Missions by those opposed to the cause. One of his brothers once wrote him asking if he wished any action taken in regard to an article which had appeared in a magazine published by a man noted for his anti-Foreign Mission views. Dr. Willingham replied: "I haven't time to bother with —————; I have the Lord's work to do." To a Baptist editor in one of the Southern States he writes:

"I am not surprised that you should be considerably put out in your mind and heart after reading the magazine of which you write. There are so many misstatements in that magazine that it is enough to make a man 'mad clean through.' If there was any chance of having an honest discussion, I believe I would advise you to go right ahead, but when you know beforehand that the truth will be so terribly perverted, what is a man to do? For about eighteen years I have been brought into close touch with foreign missionaries. I believe that they are as good a set of people as the Lord has on this earth. I do not believe that they are mercenary and general, deceptive frauds. Oh, that other people were as honest as our missionaries.

"In reference to paying a man in China with a wife and five children \$1,750 for salary, I do not think that is excessive, considering the costs of living. Let it be understood that some of the necessary articles for these people have to be imported from foreign countries. Just take our missionaries who have lived for years in China, and tell me of one who has gotten rich. On the other hand, see how they return home with hardly decent clothing, broken down in body and almost penniless. Some time ago a brother in China, whose salary is paid by a church in Tennessee, told me that he had to sell his bed and board to get a decent suit of clothes in which to appear before the churches in this country. I remember another case where a brother came from another foreign field through Richmond and stopped here a few days, and I gave him some of my clothes to fill his needs. I hardly know how to express myself when anyone who has stayed in this country and tried by different methods to accumulate money, will try to besmirch the name of these noble, earnest followers of the Lord Jesus. It is a rank, gross, base injustice. The preachers who remain here at home and help to support these noble workers for God in the foreign fields are not the ones who find fault. You do not hear them complaining about injustice and whining about their being poorly paid. They know that they can make extra money here running farms and holding meetings, and can, in one way or another, get some additional help, while the earnest missionary is expected to give all of his time to the work. Not only is he working, but oftentimes his wife is out working, also, and it is on this

account that missionaries think it is better to hire native people who will work for them at \$1.50 or \$2.00 a month, while feeding themselves, in order that the wife of the missionary may go out and do work at the same time her husband is working.

"I have been to the foreign fields myself and seen what Christianity does for the Chinese. I have seen men who have given up their inheritance and their families for the cause of Christianity. I have seen a man who had marks on his body ten inches long where he had been beaten for the Lord. We talk about the few hundred missionaries who lost their lives in the Boxer Uprising for the cause of Christianity, but we say very little about the 10,000 Chinese who laid down their lives at the same time. It is easy enough for someone to sit down in this country and abuse our missionaries and converts in foreign lands while he is lining his pockets with gold, and claim that all is done on the foreign field for gold. People who wear blue glasses are very apt to see everything blue in others. My brother, when a man has been offered \$5,000, or more, more than he is now getting, if he will take other work, he is not especially impressed with the honesty and sincerity of any man who will charge that he is working for money. What pains me is not that one deluded soul will make charges against our missionaries, the best people on earth, but it is that there are so many who will read what he writes and wonder whether this man is correct, and the hundreds of consecrated men and women who have gone out to work for the Master are frauds."

In depicting the love which Southern Baptists felt for R. J. Willingham, the author would not imply that there were none who criticized him and his methods. No one who accomplishes a great work is free from criticism; no man is infallible, however consecrated he may be; the methods of no one are faultless, however fervent his desire to perform the Lord's work in the manner most pleasing to Him. R. J. Willingham's every thought and effort was for Foreign Missions; his burning desire was that he might be used of the Lord in this work and earnestly did he seek

Divine guidance in carrying it on. He realized that there were some who criticized him and his methods, and there were a few occasions when he was deeply wounded. It was not strange that he should be—he knew how those criticisms hurt the work and crippled the efforts of those who were carrying it on. It was, indeed, hard to know, after having given himself entirely to the work, that he was misunderstood by some who had not given serious thought to the various questions. He was not a person, however, to harbor resentment; and, concerning those who were not in sympathy with him, he had no word of censure. He felt that he was carrying on the work as directed by the Southern Baptist Convention; and he realized that on the whole he had the hearts of his brethren. Assured by their many expressions of love and esteem, he pressed on in the work.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SECRETARY AMONG FELLOW-OFFICIALS.

The love felt for Dr. Willingham by the Southern Baptist brotherhood in general was shared by those who were associated with him in carrying on the work of the denomination. Harmony existed between the three Boards; and a warm friendship, between the Secretaries, who, as they met so often in presenting their work before Conventions and other missionary gatherings, and as they were thrown together on the long trips, were able to become well acquainted and personally attached. During the early years of Dr. Willingham's administration, the Secretaryship of the Home Mission Board was held successively by Dr. Tichenor, Dr. Kerfoot, and Dr. McConnell. Each was his warm friend. Dr. Gray, who as Secretary of this Board was for more than ten years his yoke-fellow in service, writes interestingly of their friendship and of his impressions of his fellow-secretary:

"We traveled the country over from Maryland to Oklahoma, from Missouri to Florida, and the fellowship of those years will linger in my memory and be cherished as among the dearest of my life.

"His devotional spirit was paramount in all his work. His prayers in the closet were as unctious and moving as they were in great assemblies when men shook in spiritual excitement as he led them up to the very presence of God. His prayers were often begun, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,' thus voicing his adoration and devotion. Prayer was a real and vital thing with him, and all who heard his tremulous and melting tone in prayer were made to feel that God was supreme in his heart.

"A singleness of aim and oneness of purpose was another characteristic of this great-hearted man. A world lost in



sin—and especially the world beyond the seas, comprehended in the term 'Foreign Missions'—bore down upon his soul with distressing heaviness. It was ever upon his heart and mind. In traveling with him to conventions he seemed restless to reach the end of the journey that he might talk on Foreign Missions. Immediately upon his arrival all the people felt that the incarnation of the foreign missionary spirit was present. Throughout the meeting of the body, in the homes, on the church grounds, or in the assembly, he carried the atmosphere of Foreign Missions. He was felt to be its great exponent and champion.

"A convention was a tax upon his mental and spiritual and physical man. The association and fellowship with his brethren drew tremendously upon his vitality. Association with returned missionaries and prospective missionaries intensified his Foreign Mission zeal. Frequently he would come from a Convention exhausted, his great frame termulous and his spirit weary.

"A special instance I recall in connection with the Texas Baptist Convention at Dallas. We had both spoken on our special work to great, inspiring audiences. When not in the Convention assembly speaking or listening he had been almost hourly in conference with young men and women who had the Foreign Mission field in view or with returned missionaries. We finished our special work the day before the Convention adjourned and left for the Arkansas Convention in Fort Smith. On reaching the station, I found he had arrived and had purchased his ticket and his sleeper for the night. 'Hello, Comrade!' said I. 'How are you?' 'Nearly worn to death. I haven't had, it looks like, a minute to myself. Oh, the calls and the claims upon my time and energy! I am so glad for a breathing spell.' Just then heaved into sight a half dozen splendid brethren, ministers and laymen, on their way home. Then others poured in. One speaking for the crowd: 'Why, Brother Willingham, Brother Gray! We are so glad we can have a word with you. It was impossible for us to get this opportunity during the Convention.' So all rest was gone. As if by intuition on the part of both, we turned our valises over to the Pullman porter and for nearly a hundred miles rode with the brethren in the crowded coach, with two on every seat,

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and sometimes three. I could see that he was wearied, but to be with the brethren and talk about his work kept him aglow with zeal.

"The sincerity and great depth of his religious convictions were manifested in his ability to tell the same thing oftentimes in the same way with no abatement of force. The message was fresh *to* him because it was fresh *in* him, and that made it fresh and impelling *with* others. Many a man among us had his flagging zeal spurred and quickened by the ceaseless energy of this great champion of Foreign Missions.

"His personality was tremendous. With the simplicity of a child he mingled the wisdom of a man. His sturdy, practical sense was given tremendous power by his fervid mysticism. More than any man among Southern Baptists, he put Foreign Missions to the front. I thank God upon every remembrance of him and for the privilege of having been with him a co-worker."

Dr. V. I. Masters, of the Home Mission Board, a warm personal friend, writes:

"Being a native of South Carolina, Dr. Willingham's old home state, when I became old enough to be somewhat in touch with the life of the Baptist denomination and met Dr. Willingham, his generous spirit seemed to flow out to me in a partiality perhaps even beyond that which he bestowed upon his brethren everywhere. Almost my first denominational work was connected with the Baptist newspaper of South Carolina, and my movements over the state brought me repeatedly to the lovely and romantic section where the boyhood of Dr. Willingham was spent.

"He seemed always to enjoy conversing about the picturesque country of lower South Carolina, where he was reared, and partly through such conversations I came to know him more intimately—whom I had all along loved and admired.

"At the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville in 1914 we had reached the end of our first year in the recent agitation for changes in our denominational methods, which has continued to the present. I chanced to walk with Dr. Willingham to the hotel while the Convention was still in

session. He was troubled over the impression which some of the brethren seemed to have that the Home and Foreign Mission Boards did not get along in perfect harmony. He said to me:

"Masters, do you think the brethren of the two boards get along well?" "I know they do," I replied, "and I suppose during the last year I have said this with all possible emphasis to dozens of men. But it seems difficult, once an impression has got in the public mind, to correct it, however little foundation it may have."

"Then Dr. Willingham spoke as follows: 'Dr. Gray and I have always gotten along well, and since you younger men have joined us in the work it seems to be even better than before. My heart is deeply grieved that the brethren should have gotten the idea that the best of fellowship does not exist between those of us whom they have entrusted with the work of the Mission Boards.'

"So far as I remember, it was the last time I had the privilege of speaking with him. What he said was in entire keeping with his character and life. His was a great soul and a generous heart. He loved Foreign Missions with a passionate devotion, but there was room in his heart for his brethren, whether they were engaged in Foreign Mission service or any other service."

Especially tender was the friendship which existed between him and Dr. Frost of the Sunday School Board. In 1905, in a personal letter to him, Dr. Frost writes:

"No one could be kinder or more large-hearted in dealing with his brethren than you have been with me. You are always a fresh inspiration to me."

After Dr. Willingham's death, Dr. Frost writes:

"Dr. Willingham was to me one of the greatest men I ever knew—great in very sense of greatness. I do not see how he could have been a greater Secretary than he was."

Dr. I. J. Van Ness, of the Sunday School Board, writes the following interesting lines of his relations with Dr. Willingham:

"My most delightful recollections of Dr. Willingham are

of the times when we traveled together. When I first began my connection with the Sunday School Board I was inclined to fight shy of him for long journeys. He was so intense in public that I feared a journey with him would be a continual missionary speech. Someone has said that a great Secretary is a man who is always talking about his work. This may be true, but it does not make the man a pleasant companion for a long journey. Dr. Willingham never lost the sense of his work and the burden which rested upon him, but in the intimate associations of traveling he threw off as far as he could the strain. We had an understanding between us, not in words, but unconsciously, that when we were together we were free to relax.

"I remember one time coming away from a Convention where we had been for days constantly meeting people and talking with them. We were to go on the train together. It happened that the meeting was near the northern border of the state. The train going south left the depot some ten or fifteen minutes before the one going north. All the brethren left on the train to the southward, and as the last man disappeared through the gate we both instinctively sank back upon a bench. Dr. Willingham turned to me with a quizzical look and said: 'Did you ever sing that hymn which begins, "Where congregations ne'er break up?"' I replied, 'Is that your idea of heaven?' He shook his head. A few minutes later we took our train for the northward, finding that there were no other passengers on the Pullman. It was an excessively hot day. He took off his coat, cuddled down in one end of a section, while I did the same thing in one some distance apart. So we traveled until another party came into the Pullman. Then the coats had to go on, and we found ourselves seated side by side ready for a delightful chat about all sorts of things.

"Another time we had a memorable trip, which none of us ever forgot. Dr. Willingham and I were at Estill Springs at an encampment. The train going to Chattanooga was supposed to stop at the encampment platform. We were ready for it, but it sailed by us without even hesitating. The result was, we had to take an afternoon train to Nashville, a night sleeper to Memphis, and then a long day's run to Vicksburg in order to get to the Mississippi Convention.

At Memphis we met up with Dr. Dargan and Dr. Folk, and the four of us had a jolly Fourth of July. Dr. Willingham was the life of the crowd. They turned a joke on me early in the morning, and he rubbed it in on me all day long. He was bubbling over with funny stories and witty comments.

"I traveled with him on many occasions after this. Instead of avoiding each other, we made occasions to get together, and many and delightful were the incidents of such journeys. I am inclined to think that the freedom of such journeys is one of the best indications of a man's heart. There was never anything which passed between us which would lessen the sense of responsibility for the work which we represented, but there came the easy friendship which took us into our family relations, our personal aspirations, and all the bright and pleasing things which make life worth the living.

"I could go on and write, as others will, of his public service. I have wondered over and over again as I heard him speak how he could gather such spiritual momentum amid the routine of Convention traveling and speaking. I knew some of his speeches as only fellow-secretaries who travel together can know each other. He never failed, however, to impress me by the something which he brought out from the inner depths of his heart and soul for such occasions. Wherever he went there was the sense of this great power. It was a peculiar gift, and, more than any one thing, it helped him to do the great work of lifting Southern Baptist mission giving, which was his peculiar contribution to our work.

"He had a quality of common sense and keen discernment which led him to avoid a philosophical statement of his views, but simply to do the thing. He was conservative, as we all know, but when he once took up a new line of thinking or of working he committed himself absolutely to it. For example, when he realized that the work had grown too big for one man and must be shared with others, no man could have been more generous in the way he trusted and encouraged those who were associated with him. It was the same way with any method. Let him once be brought to see that the time was ripe for it, and from the new vantage point he would broaden out to the full capacity of the new position which he had accepted."

The Corresponding Secretary was beloved by his associates in the Foreign Mission Rooms. Those who retired from the services of the Board were ever his loyal friends, while those who were associated with him during the latter years of his life in many ways expressed their love. Dr. E. E. Bomar, who, during the years succeeding his Secretaryship, so often and so beautifully expressed his devotion to his former co-worker, draws the following interesting picture:

“First of all I was soon impressed by a habit the like of which I never saw anywhere else. When Dr. Willingham reached his office, whether early in the morning or upon his arrival from a trip in the field, he went immediately to his own room. His stenographer, who knew his habit, and others who happened to be there, quietly slipped out when they heard his footsteps approaching. There was never any mistaking his footsteps. Immediately on entering, he closed, and sometimes locked, the door, to be alone with God in prayer. It was only for a little time, but all of us in adjoining rooms were quiet while he met with God. Occasionally, after he had his own prayer, he would call to me and say, ‘Let us pray together.’ No stress of business or any other thing caused him to omit his prayer alone with God. He never spoke of it to me, nor I to him.

“At one period we concluded that we would go over all the work afresh and take stock, so to speak, of the churches in the Southland and consider what they were doing and what they could be induced to do in order to enlarge the work. This stock-taking process was a large undertaking. It involved a survey of many hundreds of churches, and due deliberation on each. It was preceded by the collecting of hundreds of the minutes of the associations, and the writing of many letters. In order to do it, and yet have time for the ordinary work, we arose very early, and awoke our wives still earlier, in order to get us a little breakfast, and then we were at our desks before the milk-carts had finished their deliveries.

“This time he took me into his prayer life. There was no opportunity for him to be alone. The day was begun

with the Scripture and then we prayed together. Most often he led. I cannot describe in detail how he prayed, but certain impressions remain. He always called God simply 'Father,' never that I remember, 'our Father.' There was absolutely no convention about his prayer. He spoke to his Father. Nearly always he would say something like this: 'Father, the work is Thine and we are Thine. Use us. We want to do this work the very best we know how, but we are poor, weak creatures and the work is great. Father, give us wisdom; we need wisdom to do Thy work; give us wisdom and Thy name shall have the glory.'

"I may not have quoted him verbatim, but these words, or something like them, were in every prayer. Then followed petitions for the missionaries, the pastors and workers in the field, and our families. Then he would rise from his knees, for he always got down on his knees, and begin the work with vigor and at a pace I sometimes found it difficult to keep up with.

"Several times during the years we were associated together he would stop everything and call me in with him to pray for the work, but never because he was afraid or seemed to feel a sense of mistrust of his brethren or of the outcome of the work. He never had any mistrust that I could discover, and never once prayed for himself, though during part of that time he was overwhelmed with work and not in the best of health. I may mention two other practices that he had. One was to keep his Bible open on his desk almost all the time—even when the correspondence was great. I have seen him with a pile of letters in front of him and the Bible near the letters, open and often bearing the marks of recent reading. He read the Bible devoutly even when he was at work, and when he was preparing a speech he always began with a reading of the Scriptures. The other practice could hardly be called a habit. Sometimes he would break out in song—not often, and yet not infrequently—when closing his desk at the end of a day's work. I cannot recall any song, but remember that they were always hymns of cheer. Once, a day or two before Christmas, I heard him singing a Southern melody.

"'Hello in there,' I called out from my room, 'what is the matter in there?'"

“‘Bang!’ went his desk as he closed it for the day. He kept on singing and then called out, ‘I’ve got Christmas in my bones. Time to be going. Our wives are expecting us.’

“I once asked him if he slept well. His reply impressed me. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I do not always sleep well, but of late, especially, I awake praying and praising Him, and often I fall to sleep again.’

“There was an indefinable simplicity and magnetism and robustness about his devotional life. It was as much a part of him as his rare eloquence and his uncommon business powers.”

Dr. T. B. Ray writes:

“It is very difficult to give an accurate picture of Dr. Willingham in the Mission Rooms among his associates. I think of his cheery ‘Good morning, Brother,’ his bustling activity, his strain under the burden, his devoted, prayerful attitude toward God, his big-hearted counsel, his paternal consideration for all about him. How can one describe the spirit of a man, because, although it is the one over-mastering thing about him, it defies description?

“Before I came to Richmond some of my friends told me that Dr. Willingham and I would not be able to work harmoniously together, because we both were positive characters and would clash. This prediction was wide of the mark. We did not clash, but lived in the most loving co-operation. While Dr. Willingham made up his mind quickly and was positive in his judgments and opinions, he was glad to have the other fellow hold and advocate opinions. He respected the opinions of others. Many times he remarked to me, ‘I like you because I can always easily find out where you stand, and you do not quibble over little things.’ Such was his attitude. He liked for a man to have positive opinions and to advocate them. The one thing he objected to was the quibbling about non-essential details. We did not always agree, but whenever we did not agree, the man responsible for the department involved in the decision was left to follow the course he thought best. The consideration, above all things, with him was the good of the cause. When he saw that his associates were placing the cause first, it made little difference to him if they dif-



ferred with him about the methods of procedure. Men whose hearts are united upon placing a great cause above all selfish considerations will inevitably get along well, even if they happen to disagree about methods. This principle, whether or not defined in his mind, was what made it possible for Dr. Willingham to work in such fraternal relations with his associates and allow to them the privilege of using the largest possible initiative. He was never guilty of attempting to curb the initiative in any one of his associates. He realized that the degree of a man's initiative measures his value as a leader in the Foreign Mission work. This initiative he encouraged, because he knew it was the greatest contribution anyone could make to the cause.

"He was uniformly thoughtful of his associates. He held them in honor and was always glad to give them hearty recognition for their work. He thought of their personal, as well as their official, affairs. He came often into my office and said, 'I think you are working too hard. Get off and take a rest. Go fishing.' He sometimes would remark that he had not paid as much attention to the physical side of his life as he should, and was anxious that his associates should not make the same mistake. He was always ready for conferences. No matter how busy he was, he would lay down his work to help a brother Secretary in his.

"There were three things wherein he was a great inspiration to his associates:

"1. The robust vigor of his faith in God. His ability to lay hold upon God at all seasons had the effect of imparting courage and hope to those close to him. Everyone knows how he despised debt, and yet no debt could daunt him. He wrestled with it to make the people see their responsibility, but he was serene in the strength of his faith.

"2. His enthusiasm for Foreign Missions. He not only believed in God, but he had the profoundest belief in the work of world-wide missions. To the task of making Christ known everywhere he was committed without any reservation. His blazing enthusiasm for Foreign Missions fanned into flame the zeal of his brothers in the work. There was no halting, no questioning here. This enthusiasm was so contagious that it elicited the utmost co-operation and endeavor from all those about him.

"3. His prayer life. No one who was permitted to share with Dr. Willingham his prayer life will ever forget the privilege. He was most worshipful in prayer. How many times did he begin his prayer by saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.' This worshipful attitude was most uplifting. There was no crude familiarity about his praying. He knew the Lord and Saviour intimately, but he never forgot that He was the God, high and lifted up. In his praying, Dr. Willingham was wonderfully gifted in bringing others to a deep realization of the Presence of God.

"So, as a big-hearted brother, he led us. We were glad to follow his leadership, because it was so generous. His inherent manhood commanded respect and his big-hearted brotherliness secured a co-operation which was cordial and loving."

Mr. R. R. Gwathmey, Treasurer of the Board, writes:

"To know Dr. Willingham was to love him, and I count it an inestimable privilege to have lived so long close to his inner self, and to have known and shared his cares and burdens, which were slowly and surely crushing out his great spirit. Gifted with a tremendous capacity for work, and scrupulously attentive to every detail, he literally carried the Board upon his heart, and was always as ready to listen to the joys or woes of the missionaries, as if they were members of his own household, while his hospitality to them as they came and went was unbounded. No day was ever begun without a fervent prayer for their work in the far-away field, nor did he ever forget with child-like faith to seek his Father's guidance in solving the hard and perplexing problems confronting him each busy day. Oh, it was marvelous then to see the vast amount of work he daily accomplished so cheerfully and uncomplainingly! Often he had to resort to novel expedients to rid himself of the long-winded and thoughtless brother who would drop in and tarry, to his great discomfiture, when his time was so precious.

"What a splendid business man he was! Eminently fitted for high positions which would readily have paid three times the salary he was getting, which he would not allow the Board to increase, always protesting, when it was pro-

posed, that he was not working for money. So courteous and kind and liberal was he that I do not know of his ever having a serious difficulty with a member of the Board, even though there were at times great differences of opinion as to plans and policies. His energy was marvelous; often he would work up to a late hour and then travel all night to meet an engagement to speak or preach, and his burning appeals never failed to reach the hearts of his hearers and bring a liberal response. He was a wonderful money-getter, not by high pressure appeals, but by tenderly pleading for the cause which he so dearly loved himself, and taught others to love so that they gladly gave as *a high privilege*. No wonder that, with such a peerless leader, the work of the Board went forward by leaps and bounds, and marvelous results were accomplished, for the approving smile of his Father was upon him in his great work."

In the resolutions of the Foreign Mission Board upon the death of Dr. Willingham, the following statement is made:

"It is a fact worthy of record here that though he was a strong, imperious, compelling sort of person, he mixed with these outstanding traits so much of gentle courtesy, of consideration for his brethren and for their judgments, that no meeting of the Board throughout the long period of his administration was ever marred by the slightest disturbance of the close friendship between him and every one of its members."

Dr. W. R. L. Smith, who was for thirteen years a member of the Board, and, at the same time Dr. Willingham's pastor, draws the following interesting picture:

"Many were the times we talked together on the problems ever pressing on him for solution, and often were the moments when we bowed in prayer for the guiding wisdom of the great Head of the Church. The devoutness of this man was as marked as his tireless energy. It was good to be with him. His touch was magnetic, and his whole-souled consecration was an inspiration.

“Always busy at his desk during office hours, he was never fretted at interruptions. I do not think I ever saw him lose his temper or even his patience. He had, as an expedient for self-protection, a large cardboard inscribed with the words, ‘My Busy Day.’ When matters pressed, he set this card in a conspicuous place to plead for the caller’s mercy. I do not know how often I impudently laid that card on its face, and seated myself by my beloved and toiling Secretary. He liked the audacity of a friend. The truth is, he often needed to be shaken off his task. My discretion never forsook me. A few brief words, I put that eloquent hint on duty again and silently stole away.

“No Secretary was ever more courteous and deferential to his Board. He came with views and plans, as he should, but never was their a claim of superior wisdom, or any shade of demand that his recommendations pass. Commonly, they did; sometimes they did not. He believed in his brethren, and his brethren cordially believed in him. He was too wise a leader to show resentment at the disapproval or modification of a scheme and more, he was too good a man to feel it. In thirteen years I never saw him the least ruffled or out of humor in that Mission Room.”

This chapter cannot be concluded without a few words from Dr. J. B. Gambrell, who, as the State Secretary of Texas, took so prominent a part in the Foreign Mission work of Southern Baptists. Dr. Gambrell writes:

“Dr. Willingham had two outstanding qualifications for his great work. He had many other qualifications, but two stand out like mountain peaks in his life.

“First, he was a great business man, and there is a very large business side to missions. His business ability commanded the respect of banks and business men everywhere. They felt his strength and had confidence in his judgment. This characteristic had very much to do with his large success as a Secretary.

“But, second, I do not regard this as the main qualification. The great thing about Dr. Willingham was his tremendous personality, which was given over completely to his work. Among his brethren in the West he was called

'Mr. Greatheart.' He was never in a mood to raise questions. He was a Christian of such heroic mold as to bear down all small oppositions and of such fervent zeal as to inspire and lift up the masses. As a Secretary he dealt very little in the smallnesses of some secretaries—fine points of management and organization. Before every assembly he addressed he set out the mission cause in its greatest outlines and poured out a flood of missionary passion. There was nothing little about him—large in body, in brain, in heart, in plans—he led the masses with his own convictions and passion.

"There is little wonder that, under a leadership so positive, sane and inspiring, the cause went forward under his administration at a great rate. He made things glow, grow, and go, and has left an impress on the South that will last."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SECRETARY AND THE MISSIONARIES.

"Mamma, aren't there more missionaries in the world than any other kind of people?" The question of six-year-old Harris, Dr. Willingham's fourth son, propounded one evening while several missionaries were being entertained, caused a ripple of laughter among all who heard it. It was, however, a natural question for a little fellow to ask. Many missionaries and those applying to be appointed visited his father's home. However pressing his duties, Dr. Willingham was never too busy to care for the missionaries and the "new missionaries," as he usually styled the applicants. Cheerfully would he meet trains—early or late—purchase tickets or make other traveling arrangements, and in countless ways look after the welfare of these noble people. Not less tireless in her efforts was Mrs. Willingham, who, always putting her husband's work first, was ever ready to receive his guests, however unexpected or however many.

"We people out here often talk about your delightful home and our queen of Foreign Missions," writes Rev. W. C. Newton, of China, in 1906. "Many a woman with her arms full of children has been inspired to brave endurance by the blessed example of Mrs. Willingham. She has shown what could be done, just with a home, for Foreign Missions."

Now, a missionary who had been compelled to come alone with her little ones to this country would spend a few days in the Secretary's home. Sometimes a bridal couple expecting soon to leave for the foreign field would spend part of their honeymoon there; often the child of a missionary, returning to the United States to obtain an

education, would stop long enough to receive a warm welcome, loving sympathy, and father-like counsel which would help him at the beginning of the long separation from loved ones; sometimes a worker, returned to this country in search of health, would find encouragement and cheer; many applicants, instead of being lodged in a lonely hotel, would be entertained in a home full of young people who sought to make their stay enjoyable and to allay any nervousness occasioned by the thought of the examination before the Board. Every missionary who came to Richmond would be entertained at least at one meal. During the years in which a large number of new missionaries were appointed, his table would often be stretched to its limit, as many would sometimes appear before the Board at the same meeting.

Dr. Willingham's children were often delegated to entertain the visitors while their father was busy at the office. How many sight-seeing trips they conducted, visiting old St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry made his famous speech; the equestrian statue of Washington, second only to that of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg; the Virginia Capitol, the old capitol of the Confederacy remodeled, in which can be seen the famous Houdon statue of Washington; St. Paul's Church, in which the pews of Lee and Davis still stand; the majestic equestrian statue of Lee; and other sights of historical interest.

New missionaries were selected with great care. During a few years of Dr. Willingham's secretaryship, few applied to be sent; during the greater number, however, many were anxious to go. In 1899 he writes:

"One of the most difficult of all the problems which come before the Board is to decide whom we shall send. We have a great many applications now before us, and they continue to come in. As the servant of the churches and our brethren, we feel that we ought to send those whom the churches and brethren most highly recommend and whom we feel are the best suited for the work of the Lord which has been intrusted to us."

Carefully the Secretary considered the applications which were received. Many letters did he write that he might obtain all the information possible in regard to the character of the applicant and his fitness for the work of a foreign missionary. Many who applied were not fitted for the work. His letters to them were always most kindly; the spirit which pervades the following communication was found in all in which he was compelled to decline an application:

“Our Board, after careful consideration of your application, on yesterday decided that it would not be best to appoint you as one of our missionaries. We have many applying to go and have to select some, while others of us have to stay and ‘hold the ropes’ for those who do go. May the Master guide and bless you.”

Repeatedly he impressed upon those applying the need of preparation. How often did he write advice similar to the following:

“Thorough preparation is best for any work in life. The Master’s work is the greatest of all and the preparation should be the best one can get.”

A most interesting picture of the appearing of new missionaries before the Board is given by Dr. W. R. L. Smith:

“Some of the tenderest scenes I ever witnessed occurred in his Mission Rooms. Young men and women, candidates for appointment to the foreign fields, come now and then in groups for examination and approval. The stories of struggle and self-surrender told by these young people often melted the Board to tears. My eyes grow dim now at the remembrance of those meetings. I can see them now, standing in line, after investigations are over, the Board’s presiding officer tells them of their acceptance for the work; he gives words of tender counsel and good cheer; then the members pass along the line to give handclasps and benediction. I can hear Willingham, in soft voice, start a hymn.



Sometimes we sang it through; sometimes it broke down in a sob. Solemn prayer closed the scene. Often in those moments I have wished that all the Baptists of the South could witness the service."

After the applicant was appointed, there were many arrangements in regard to the trip which must be made by the Secretary. No detail was too minute for him to attend to; no number of letters too great for him to write that the new missionary, especially if a single woman, might make the ocean voyage with other missionaries and congenial people. His letters to those who had just left country, home, and loved ones for the work were tender and full of loving counsel, the keynote of which was to "give them the pure, old gospel." Before leaving for China, Dr. Adrian S. Taylor writes:

"You do not know what a feeling of security it gives one to know that you are the one through whom God will care for us when we are in China."

The confidence expressed in Dr. Taylor's letter was felt by the missionaries in the thick of the fight. To them Dr. Willingham was as a brother or a father. They knew that he was interested in them individually; that their joys and successes gladdened his heart, and that he sorrowed with them in their disappointments and griefs. Often their letters told of sickness and suffering; frequently a cablegram brought the sad news of death. His heart went out to the sorrowing when he heard of children left motherless and a husband lonely by the death of a faithful missionary; of a woman and little children left alone in a foreign country; of loving parents losing five children within one week; of a splendid worker dying from the effects of overwork; of a young couple who had contracted disease by living in a native house, returning to this country only to die. Many were the heartbreaking griefs that he shared; many the

words of comfort and consolation that he wrote; many, the petitions that he offered for those sorrowing in a foreign country.

At times some of the missionaries were in the midst of war, famine, or persecution. Once, if not oftener, the Secretary was compelled to apply to the authorities in Washington to secure the release of a missionary who had been imprisoned in a foreign country. The Boxer uprising in 1900 seriously threatened the safety of the missionaries in China. So critical, indeed, did the situation become that a conference of Foreign Mission Secretaries was called in New York. Dr. Willingham sent cablegrams to the Southern Baptist missionaries in China urging that every precaution be taken. Though many missionaries of various denominations and nationalities were slain during this terrible uprising not one from the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention met death. Dr. C. W. Pruitt, of China, relates the following incident in regard to the spirit shown by Dr. Willingham and the Board during these trying times:

“Mrs. Pruitt and I were for the time being cut off from our work in Hwanghien, and on the advice of the Mission decided to go home on furlough at once and be ready to return to our work after the storm. It was September, and we were guests of Dr. F. C. McConnell and family in Lynchburg. The Monday Morning Pastors’ Conference was being held in the study of Dr. McConnell’s church. We were all surprised when he was called to the long-distance telephone to talk with Richmond. Dr. Willingham wanted to say that they had secured a doctor for Hwanghien and that he would be in Richmond the next day, and would I come on and meet him. A great meeting, that! What a beautiful hospitality. Dr. Ayres and I were both entertained in the home. To find Dr. Willingham and the Board unabashed by that great Boxer uprising that had cost tens of thousands of precious human lives was surely refreshing. Day and night the one absorbing theme was to press

on and take China for Christ. Dr. Ayers was appointed while we were in Richmond, and I should find it hard to say who was the happier, Dr. Willingham or I."

Dr. Willingham was ever ready to serve the missionaries. The following extracts taken from two of his letters are examples of his many expressions of his desire to render any assistance possible:

"I do not get out of patience when you write about these things, for it is my business to look after all mission interests, and I am glad to be of service when I can. Much more perplexing questions than these come before us, and much smaller ones. It would amuse you sometimes to see what I have to look after. For instance, buy a piece of a sewing machine and send it to Africa, and then buy a piece of a buggy for someone in the same country; but I take pleasure in serving my brethren in these matters."

"If I can serve you at any time, do not hesitate to call on me. I am here for that purpose, and if there are any questions about which you wish information, feel perfectly free to ask. I want all the missionaries to know that I am their friend in the work."

Soon after becoming secretary, Dr. Willingham wrote an open letter to the missionaries, in which he told them of his interest in them and of his being better able to understand the conditions which surrounded them on account of his recent visit to the Holy Land, Italy, and other foreign countries. In this letter he gives the following advice—advice which he himself followed:

"The Journal is your means of talking to the people; let us not have it a mourner's bench nor a graveyard, but rather a jubilee platform, to praise God in songs of trying and triumph."

So often in the Journal he writes in a sympathetic manner of the "second year"—that year which is apt to be most trying of all to the missionaries. His sympathetic

understanding of the missionaries is vividly portrayed in the following letter which was written to Dr. Love after Dr. Willingham's death :

"We all pray that you may have grace and power from on High to do this double work that has been placed on you by the denomination. I have made a vow to God that it will not be through me that the Secretary of our Board will break down. Dr. Love, I think I know what I say when I tell you that one of the causes of Dr. Willingham's break-down was trouble on the foreign field. Thank God for his noble life and great, big heart! He held me up sometimes when I was in despair. This is the first letter I have really written you since you have taken Dr. Willingham's place, and I am going to tell you one thing that is on my heart, and I think the only thing I have ever regretted and feel remorse for. I cannot now repent of it, at least I cannot make amends to him. At Nashville, I did not have the courage to go to him and beg his pardon, and now it is too late.

"When I first took charge of the work, he wrote me that I had better get———to divide the responsibility with me, and I replied that he had his own work and did not want to take any more, and, besides, it was impossible to have two heads to any one institution. Dr. Willingham insisted in about three different letters during more than six months. I was worn out and overworked in the heat, my family away among the mountains. Wife could not live in the heat at that time; she is used to it now. I sat down and wrote him the following letter. I can remember every word of it now: 'Dear Dr. Willingham: If you think I have not enough sense to direct the work, send out a man that can do it; but remember that as long as I have charge of it it will be managed by———from———, and not by R. J. Willingham from Richmond, Virginia. Sincerely, etc.' He was a big man—big enough to understand me. God bless him! I got the following reply: 'Dear Brother———: Your last letter shows that you are worn out and that you need a rest. Now, just pull up and get out into the country and let things go for a week.'

"I think that was the biggest thing he could have done. He got at my heart and he kept it. I may be able to tell him when we meet up there how I tried to get that letter out

of the postoffice and failed, how I tried to tell him how I learned to love him for his tender and understanding reply. Dr. Love, do not take us for what we say nor for what we do, always, but for what you believe us to be at our best when not under the pressure of the heat and stress of this tremendous fight in this atmosphere. It will save you nerve-wrecking hours when you may feel the very shadow of Gethsemane. Dr. Willingham did not write another suggestion about the internal management of the work for the rest of the three years I had it in hand. When letters like the one I wrote Dr. Willingham come to me, my answers have been gentle for the memory of his kindness and deep understanding of me in the stress of fight. I feel relieved for telling you what I should have told Dr. Willingham, as he is beyond the reach of my letters or my voice; yet, somehow, I feel he knows."

The following incident, trivial enough in itself, illustrates Dr. Willingham's thoughtfulness. A missionary in Mexico who had written a tract which displeased the Catholics was imprisoned. In writing to various missionaries at this time, Dr. Willingham told of this arrest and inclosed one of the tracts, stating that he thought they might be interested in reading it. Such acts, the referring to a member of the missionary's family by name, the relating of a bit of news in regard to his own family, and other unofficial items were small in themselves, but to the recipient of the letter, far from home and friends, they carried assurance of his personal interest.

Spiritually wearing upon the Secretary was the inability of the Board to grant so many requests of the missionaries. How many appeals for reinforcements and equipment were in their letters. How piteously they pleaded for the means with which to grasp the wonderful opportunities! How it weighed upon the Secretary's heart to know that some of the workers were not properly housed. The news of the death of a young missionary who had died from fever brought on by the unsanitary condition of a native house

was staggering to him. He felt that it was a crime to allow these faithful workers to suffer discomfort and exposure, while Southern Baptists were living in comfortable and, in many instances, costly homes; especially after his visit to the fields, he felt that the need for suitable homes for the missionaries should be first supplied. Many letters was he compelled to write refusing requests of the missionaries that they might advance—requests which should be granted, but for which the Board was unable to supply the necessary funds. These are the things more than hard work that crush the life out of a man anxious to see the work advanced and the opportunities grasped.

His name was a household word among the missionaries and their children. A worker in Mexico was once asking her two little children questions in the catechism. All went well until some question in regard to the founder of the Jewish race was propounded; the little boy remained silent, but the little girl finally answered, "I think it was Willingham."

It is not strange that some of the missionaries who were on the foreign field largely on account of his influence should feel an especial tenderness for him. Rev. C. K. Dozier, of Japan, writes:

"We feel toward him as we would toward a father. I remember well how I felt the first time I ever saw him. It was at the Baptist Convention which met in my home town shortly after he became Secretary of the Board. I cannot tell you what he said, but I know he left his impress on me, and it burned its way into my inmost soul. A few years later, after reading of his great speech at the Savannah session of the Southern Baptist Convention, I went to my own room at our little country home, and there, on my knees, before I closed my eyes for the night's sleep, I gave my life to the Foreign Mission work."

In 1906, Dr. George B. Taylor, the veteran missionary to Italy, dedicated his book on Systematic Theology, written

in Italian, to Dr. Willingham. Some characteristics of the Secretary that inspired the confidence and love of the missionaries can be seen in the following lines written by Rev. Bryan, of China:

“It was my privilege to be in Richmond when Dr. Willingham began work as Secretary, and to go with him to his office on his very first day. He dropped down on his knees at the table and said, ‘Let us begin with prayer.’ The incident showed me that we had a Secretary that believed in prayer. I was often with him in his office, in his home, and on the road in the following years, and always found him to be our praying Secretary. His large influence and great success as Secretary was due, no doubt, in large measure to this fact. \* \* \* He and I were often together and we did not always agree, but I was never once able to find any sting in anything that he said or did to me.”

It was never the pleasure of Dr. Willingham to visit the work in Africa and in South America; but he was not the less interested in these countries. Of all the missionaries, those in Africa faced the greatest physical dangers. Several of them who were entertained in his home, after returning to their work, met an untimely death from disease brought on by the climate of the country. The missionaries of Brazil were, perhaps, most subject to persecution. Mr. Solomon Ginsburg and Dr. Z. C. Taylor were repeatedly imprisoned, and many of the others often felt the iron hand of Catholicism. Missionaries to that country often visited his home; sons of Dr. Z. C. Taylor and Dr. Bagby, two of the Nestors of the Brazilian work, attended Richmond College, and the Secretary was, therefore, able to entertain them more frequently than the children of most of the missionaries. Especially did he appreciate the gift of Brazilian coffee and nuts sent him by some of the native Christians, who, pound by pound, had brought the products of their own fields until a large quantity had been secured. In the work in Argentina and Uruguay, established during his

Secretaryship, he felt a peculiar interest. He was much interested in the missionaries to those countries, several of whom he had known while students at Richmond College.

Dr. Willingham was always interested in the romances of the missionaries. He believed that usually a man can do better work if married, and especially did he believe that a missionary in a foreign country needs the companionship of a wife and the refuge of a home. In the following extract from a letter to Miss Lilly Nelson, his interest in the romantic can be clearly seen :

“A letter from Rev. R. W. Hooker, of Toluco, Mexico, tells me of a happy event which is to take place December 24, and in which you and he are to be the most prominent parties. I am glad to hear about this. Brother Hooker is a man highly esteemed by our Board and by me personally, and I believe he is taking a wise step.

“May the Master fit you for His service, and use you abundantly for the glory of His name in the salvation of souls.”

It was, indeed, a joy to the Secretary when his son, Calder, in 1902, decided to become a foreign missionary. So many young people under his influence had surrendered their lives for service, and now the Lord had further honored him by calling his own son. As he sat on the platform before the Southern Baptist Convention that year and listened to the words of his son, he was the happiest man in the Convention; and when, at the conclusion of the address, the Secretary father and missionary son clasped hands and gazed into each other's tear-stained faces, there were many whose eyes were overflowing. In spite of his joy, however, he suffered all the pangs which any father would suffer when parting with his child; and he wrote to his son soon after his departure that he felt as if he had received a blow, or as if a part of his heart had been torn out. A few words of counsel which may prove helpful to some young missionary



are taken from letters to this son and to his wife, formerly Miss Bessie Bell Hardy, of Salem, Virginia:

"When you first get to Japau it will be well to be slow to speak and swift to hear. It is impossible for new missionaries to give wise counsel on problems when the conditions are unknown to them and entirely different from anything they have ever known. To speak too strongly at such times only gets the poor opinion of those already acquainted with the work. I want you to be known as *good advisers*. To this end do not advise much until you become well acquainted with the new surroundings, etc., on the field."

"Two things I have found out by observation and experience: (1) A person who wants to work successfully for God must be very intimate with Him. Be very close to Him, dear children, and keep there. (2) Be dead in earnest in the Lord's work—there is no time for lagging and loitering—men who succeed in other callings of life are the earnest men. You are in the highest calling—be *earnest*."

"I hope that you will be soul winners. It almost worries me at times that I cannot plead with souls, as I would like to win them to God; but he seems to have given me other work to do, and herein I rejoice."

"Missions is earnest, hard work if done right. But it is work *for the Lord* and He gives the reward. I rejoice to see that in your plans you have a time for communion with our Father, and that you are determined to learn the language. Spirituality and use of the language are two essentials to become a great missionary. May you both be deeply spiritual and very fluent in the use of the Japanese language."

"We are glad to hear that you are pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fukuoka. I would rather you be that than pastor of the First Church of Richmond or Baltimore, or Washington."

Dr. Willingham was never of the opinion that missionaries are highly paid; he knew too well of the many sacrifices made by them and of the hardships which so many of

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them experienced. On the contrary he was much impressed by their liberality. To a missionary he writes:

“The \$100 sent by you has been received. Many thanks. Oh, that our brethren at home were a hundredth part as much in earnest in this great work as the missionaries on the field.”

Again he writes:

“If all would give as the missionaries, how many could we send out *at once*.”

A beautiful picture of the Secretary is given by Rev. J. S. Cheavens:

“In the early days of March, 1912, I went to St. Louis, Mo., to the Mayfield Sanitarium, to undergo a surgical operation. The morning after my arrival in St. Louis I saw in the daily paper that Dr. Willingham was in the city. A friend of mine, at my request, informed the doctor that I was in the hospital. That afternoon Dr. Willingham and Dr. H. W. Provence came to see me. I hadn't seen Dr. Willingham since the Convention at Nashville nine years before, and I was astonished at the changes time had wrought. He wouldn't listen to a word about the work on the field, he wanted me to get well, minimized the dangers of the operation and talked of pleasant things all the time. He hardly mentioned his own troubles—the financial difficulties of the Board.

“The next day he came to see me again, and before he left told me he wished me to read the 27th Psalm. ‘Read all of it. Read to the very end, omit nothing.’ I promised him I would, and I did, but I failed to get the comfort out of the reading I hoped for. The morning after he left a florist sent me a lovely jonquil that lasted a week, irradiating beauty and gladness all the time. With the flower was a card from Dr. Willingham wishing me all kinds of blessings during my sickness.

“The dreary March days passed slowly; the gray clouds hung low and the white snow came down and covered the earth. I had painful days and nights of wakefulness.

Toward the end of the third week the sun came out every day, but my strength had not returned. My small stock of patience was almost exhausted. One day I remember when the sanitarium physician came in for his morning visit, he said that the grass was getting green in the parks. The sun came up clear that morning and as the afternoon wore away I could see it, through the smoke and haze of the city, like a great ball of molten gold in the West. I wanted to get out. The call of the out-of-doors was upon me and I was chained to my bed by an unhealed wound! My family was in Kansas City and wife and daughter both sick. I grew rebellious. Why had the Lord sent all that trouble upon me? I had been compelled to leave my work in Mexico; it seemed unjust and unkind.

"My Bible was on the bed and in my desperation I reached for it, with a prayer that God would give me a message. I opened at the Psalms and began to read:

"Wait for Jehovah:  
Be strong, and let thy heart take courage;  
Yea, wait thou for Jehovah."

"I read these words over again and their comfort began to enter my soul. I had not noticed what psalm it was. When I looked, I saw it was the 27th, the one Dr. Willingham had insisted on my reading to the very end. I read all the psalm again and felt every throb of the Psalmist's heart and my own quivered with the exultation of a new hope and a loftier courage. That night I repeated over and over again, like the chorus of an old and well beloved song, the last verse of the psalm, and in its melody found peace. I went to sleep with its harmonies in my heart. The date of that joyous experience, as I see it now penciled on the margin of my Bible, was March 29, 1912.

"I never saw Dr. Willingham any more. After his sickness last year I wrote him of the comfort his psalm, as I shall always call it, brought me. He answered, from the home of one of his sons, saying that he often read the psalm and that it always helped him."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### INCIDENTS ILLUSTRATIVE AND CHARACTERISTIC.

In the small happenings of daily life, a person's character can often best be read. Many of the following incidents are trivial enough in themselves, but they reveal the personality of the man.

While a pastor, Dr. Willingham was once criticized for wearing a gold watch chain. Lest the Lord's cause should suffer for so small a thing, he ever afterward wore, instead of the chain, a simple black guard. Several years after becoming Secretary, he took off his gold band ring, saying he could not plead for money for Missions while on his extended hand he wore a ring.

He once appeared with some inexpensive cuff buttons marked with the letter "F." Upon being asked why he had selected this letter, which did not appear in his name, he answered that the store in which he purchased them had none marked with a "W," and "F" stood for Foreign Missions. Dr. E. E. Bomar once said that he should be called "R. J. Willingham, D. E.," the "D. E." signifying "Dead in Earnest."

Dr. Bomar relates an interesting incident. Dr. Willingham had just returned from a trip. To questions concerning the trip he gave non-committal answers. After some time had elapsed, Dr. Bomar, whose suspicions had become aroused by the unusual lack of enthusiasm, said, "Now, Doctor, did you *really* have a good trip?" He admitted that he had not. While he was speaking at the church, firebells had begun to ring, and some of the people arose to leave, whereupon the preacher interrupted his speech to warn them that it was hardly necessary for them to go to the fire—

they would probably reach a warm clime soon enough. Somehow, after that, Dr. Willingham declared he was not able to make a great impression for Foreign Missions.

W. F. Yarborough relates the following amusing incident:

“A little incident, trifling enough in itself, but one which he enjoyed and over which we all laughed heartily, occurred in connection with his first visit in our home in Jackson, Mississippi. Always ready to serve, he was prevailed upon to preach at one of the Baptist churches in town where services had been announced for the evening. He took the incident of Lot pitching his tent toward Sodom and preached a soul-stirring sermon on ‘Religion in the Home.’ In the church was a family named Lott. We shared their pew that evening just in front of the pulpit. When Dr. Willingham reached the point where Lot’s wife looked back and was turned to a pillar of salt, he portrayed the incident quite vividly, and looking toward our Mrs. Lott, but not knowing her name, exclaimed, with great pathos, ‘Poor old Mrs. Lot! Poor old Mrs. Lot!’ The address was so direct and the designation so pertinent, though for other reasons, that we could scarcely restrain ourselves. Her daughters who sat beside her were convulsed with suppressed laughter, while it was difficult for others to deport themselves with becoming demeanor in the house of God. He was too much the master of himself to be disconcerted, but a number of us felt that explanations were in order as soon as he had descended from the pulpit. Dr. Willingham enjoyed the incident as much as any of us, and entered heartily into the fun which he had unwittingly caused.”

During the early years of his secretaryship, he owned property in Macon, Georgia. To his surprise, he once heard that his agent had rented one of his stores to a barroom-keeper. Immediately, he left for Macon and took measures to have the contract annulled.

In a note-book Dr. Willingham kept a careful record of the number of miles traveled by him while Secretary, the number for the twenty-one years totaling 418,600. Many

were the persons who came under his influence while he traveled those miles. He enjoyed talking to his fellow-passengers. Young salesmen who were often thrown with him traveling hailed his arrival on the train with pleasure. Many a young person during the course of a pleasant conversation was led to consider the subject of his soul's salvation. Often a tired mother was induced to rest while he entertained her little one. His sister, Mrs. W. S. Payne, relates the following:

"I was once at the depot to see him when he was passing through Atlanta. Two little children were quarreling over a penny; one got it, and that made the other cry. The poor mother was from the plainer walks of life, and with a baby in her arms, and one by her side, could do nothing for the crying children. Brother Bob called the little fellow to him and gave him two Chinese coins, which pleased him very much; then he turned to the worn mother and told her it would not long be so hard on her; they would soon grow larger. Her face brightened, for his kind words seemed to cheer her. He said to me, 'I can't bear to see anyone in trouble.'"

He once had an engagement to speak in a small town. The little narrow-gauge railroad on which the town was located was evidently not run according to the rules of larger companies, for when the train on which he was scheduled to travel arrived, the conductor informed Dr. Willingham, who happened to be the only person bound for that town, that the run would not be made. Preparations were made for another trip. Dr. Willingham, greatly surprised, remonstrated. The conductor seemed unmovable, whereupon Dr. Willingham exclaimed: "I have an engagement to speak in that town and my word is as good as my bond. I have my ticket to go on this train, and if you don't take me, it will be a long time before you or the road hears the end of this!" In referring to this incident, he once wrote:

“On one occasion I got a railroad train to turn around and go in another direction to carry me to an appointment; but I met my appointment all right, though I suppose a lot of folks ‘blessed me out’ for turning that train around.”

Over and over again in his sermons and addresses he would refer to the widow’s mite. While praising the small gift which represented sacrifice, however, he would sometimes belabor those in affluent circumstances who spoke of their small contributions as the “widow’s mite.” While in Palestine in 1908, he secured a mite and a shekel, which he afterward carried in his pocket and took great pleasure in showing. He also brought back many small shells from the Sea of Galilee; and, as he had always derived so much pleasure in the sending of foreign stamps to boys, he now enjoyed giving these shells to little girls as a memento.

Dr. Willingham was always interested in the colored people. Those in Richmond recognized him as a warm friend. A sermon before a Woman’s Missionary Society, attendance at the services of the unveiling of a monument to their noted John Jasper; the presiding at a prolonged meeting in which a church dispute was amicably settled—many such acts assured them of his interest. Dr. Livingstone Johnston, of North Carolina, relates the following incident:

“It was at a meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, a dozen years ago. A number of delegates reached the place of meeting on a belated train. There was a great rush in order to get located in time to reach the church before the session opened. The town was a considerable distance from the depot and the delegates were conveyed to their homes in hacks. The hack in which Dr. Willingham rode was crowded to the limit. The brethren were in a jolly mood, and began to talk to each other about matters of common interest. A colored man was driving the hack. Dr. Willingham was on a rear seat a considerable distance from the driver. The hack had not proceeded far when he reached over to the colored man and

asked if he was a Christian. He said he was not. Earnestly, tenderly, the great Foreign Mission secretary urged the poor colored man to give his heart to Christ. Like Philip of old, 'he preached unto him Jesus' all the way from the depot to his home, and when he left he took him by the hand and told him he would pray for him. All this was done in the quietest, simplest way, without ostentation, but all in that hack were impressed with the fact that R. J. Willingham loved the souls of men, and wanted to see them saved, whether the lost lived in the heart of heathenism or in our highly favored land."

Dr. Willingham was an ardent believer in prayer. Soon after he became secretary, his father told him that when he was a pastor he had prayed especially for him every Sunday, but that he did not know exactly how to pray for him in his new work. The son assured him that more than ever he now needed his prayers. Every January the week of prayer was observed in the Foreign Mission Rooms. So often just before the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Willingham would write editorials for the Journal in which he earnestly urged the people to plead that the presence of the Holy Spirit might be felt in the meeting. His public prayers were most tender. With a simple child-like faith he seemed to be speaking to One whom he knew was present and was listening to his words.

In his private life he was a man of prevailing prayer. At times he would observe a day of fasting; such occasions, however, were known only to his wife, who was not deceived by his pretense of eating. His great faith appropriated the promises of the Bible literally, and he prayed for material needs as well as physical. The following incident, which occurred during the summer of 1908, is but one of several in which his prayers seemed to be answered to the letter. On account of sickness, the expenses of his family during his trip to the Orient had been heavier than anticipated. In August after his return he found himself greatly in need



of \$300. To his wife he confided that he had decided to make the matter a subject of fasting and prayer. August 31 was set for this purpose. Arriving at his office that morning, he found letters from two of his brothers. One of these contained the following words: "Inclosed please find check, which please accept. No acknowledgment is necessary." The check was for \$100. In the other letter he read: "I enclose check for \$200, which I enclose *with my love*." No one save his wife had known of his need. The day of fasting had just begun, but his prayer had been answered!

At the beginning of each year, Dr. Willingham would select a motto; and over and over again during the year he would turn to that motto for strength. Some of those selected by him were: "Jehovah-Nisi—The Lord my banner"; "Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord will provide"; Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." His life motto was, "*Trust and Try*," founded on Psalm 37:3. His favorite Psalm was Psalm 27; his favorite verse, John 3:16. The hymns which he most loved to sing were: "How Firm a Foundation," sung to "Protection"; "From Greenland's Icy Mountain," "Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus"; "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

There was a book in Dr. Willingham's library from which he seemed to draw spiritual strength and vigor. This book, "Revival Sermons by Baker," written by a Presbyterian minister of Liberty County, Georgia, had once been in the library of his wife's grandmother and had long been out of print; whenever he was to hold a protracted meeting while pastor, he always pored over its contents. In the lives of Elliott and Brainard he always found fresh missionary inspiration and often read them before preparing his addresses.

A woman who lives in Richmond once declared that Dr. Willingham was the only person who could influence her to give after she had already given as much as she thought

she was able. Dr. J. B. Hawthorne would sometimes tell the following incident which occurred during a Convention. Before leaving his room at the hotel, just before starting to one of the meetings, he took some money out of his pocket-book, remarking at the time to his wife :

“Bob Willingham is going to preach on Foreign Missions, and I know I will give him everything I have with me, so I’ll leave enough for our expenses back home.”

In a private drawer of his desk Dr. Willingham kept a dollar—a gift to Foreign Missions—which he had replaced with a dollar of his own that he might keep it as a memento. This money had been sent by a poor woman, who for twenty-five years had been a shut-in. It had been saved from spending money given her by friends, and was sent as a thank-offering for “kind friends and good care through the past years.” The story of that dollar won many others for Foreign Missions.

A hospital was needed in China. An old woman gave twenty-five cents toward its erection. The Secretary told the story of this gift to a consecrated layman, who said, “With what she has given and what I am going to give, you will have enough to build the hospital.” And he wrote a check for \$1,999.75.

He did not rely merely upon his public utterances, but often sought to secure large gifts by personal interviews—as he would sometimes say he would “buttonhole the brethren.” Much was secured in this way.

He was once entertained in the home of a lawyer living in Kentucky, who, upon hearing that he was to preach on Foreign Missions the next morning, told him he was glad to entertain him, but that as he did not believe in Foreign Missions, he must not be expected to give anything. “Colonel,” said the secretary, “if I were as well informed as you are, I would not put myself against the greatest work

that is going on on earth today. I would not say I did not believe in it just because I did not know about it. It just shows you are ignorant in regard to it, no matter how well informed you are on other things." The next morning, after he had preached on what was being done in the great heathen nations and in the islands of the sea, that man stood up and said, "Put me down for \$100." At a meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention later than same Kentucky colonel walked up to him, and, putting his hand on his shoulder, told him that his church, which had been giving \$600, could be counted on for \$1,000—that all the church did not contribute he would give.

Dr. Willingham would sometimes say that he never saw but one man that he did not think ought to preach on Foreign Missions to his congregation. He would thus tell of the man :

"I sent out letters to the preachers some time ago, and one letter came back like this: 'Dear Brother, I got your letter, but I don't know that I ought to preach Foreign Missions to my congregation.' And I wanted to know why, and I read along a little farther down, and he said: 'I am the chaplain in a lunatic asylum.' And I said: 'I believe he is excusable,' and the only case I ever struck. And then, when I got to thinking about it, I did not know, after all, but what he ought to have preached it to them. Maybe it would have done them good."

While Dr. and Mrs. Willingham were visiting the Mission fields, one of their daughters spent several months visiting relatives in several of the Southern States. While she was traveling in Alabama one winter's afternoon, the conversation of some middle-aged men who had just boarded the train convinced her that they were Baptist preachers returning from some convention or other gathering. Weary of the monotony of traveling, and feeling that all Baptist preachers were her friends, she finally introduced herself to one who was sitting in front of her. As if he had known

her for years, he turned to his friends and said, "Let me introduce you to Dr. Willingham's daughter." And, until they finally left the train, the two could not be kind enough to her.

While in a depot in Augusta, Georgia, where she was compelled to change trains on the return trip, she was approached by an old man with silvery hair. "Excuse me," he said, "but aren't you Dr. Willingham's daughter?" Upon being assured that she was, he continued, "I am \_\_\_\_\_, a Baptist preacher. I never saw you before—in fact, I did not know there was such a person, but I was sure anyone with those eyes and that mouth was Dr. Willingham's daughter!" Such incidents made a home-sick girl feel that her father's child could never be friendless in Southern Baptist territory.

Dr. Willingham was loved by people of other denominations. At a Baptist gathering a few years ago a Methodist preacher said that the wonderful progress of the Baptist denomination in the South in recent years was due, not to water, but to fire. "God," he said, "has wonderfully blessed you Southern Baptists by raising up among you men of fire, men like Dr. R. J. Willingham, of Richmond, that great flaming torch set on fire from heaven, who has been sweeping over our Southland in these latter days, everywhere kindling a flame for God in the hearts of the people. The whole South, and not the Baptists alone, is in debt to God for this great flaming evangel."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE SECRETARY IN THE HOME.

Incomplete indeed would be this story of R. J. Willingham's life were it to conclude without a picture of him in his home. He was so great as a father; and his family meant so much to him that, although many incidents of a very personal nature will not be recorded, some attempt must be made to show the beautiful relations which existed between him and the members of his family.

Few homes are happier than was his. No one ever doubted that he was master of his own house. The children were trained to obey not only the word but the wish of their parents; when young they would look with astonishment at their playmates if they suggested that they should "beg" or "tease" for something which had been forbidden. Though firm with his children, he was their companion. What good times they had with him when he came home! The older children can recall scenes of thrilling romps when the father on all-fours acting as pony or elephant would race over the floor with two or three of them sitting on his back, the others eagerly watching the excitement. The younger ones can remember his shout when he entered the room, the tossing of the baby high into the air, his laughing remarks and the general air of gaiety that his presence brought. How he enjoyed acting comedian for the children! Seated in his big chair after dinner or supper, one or two tots perched on his knees or the arms of the chair, he would throw his head back and sing. His voice was strong and sweet, and he enjoyed singing. Half closing his eyes, or perhaps rolling and blinking them to the accompaniment of grotesque contortions of his face, he would launch into some of his college

songs—"Old Blind Horse Racking in the Wilderness," with its indefinite number of improvised verses; "The Ram of Darbey Town"; "Mother, May I Go Out to Swim?" "Oh, Susanna"; or some other of an inexhaustible repertoire. Perhaps, as he sang so feelingly and by his face so pathetically illustrated the sad song of the little bird whose "music was 'friz' in his throat," tears would begin to appear in the eyes of the little girl with the tender heart, but a smile would shine through them as he suddenly launched in most joyous tones into "The Little Girl That Smiled at Me."

Sometimes the children would take part in the concert. They were often called on for duets, trios, or quartets; and frequently they all joined with the father in singing. Often the songs were religious. "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus," sung antiphonally, was one of the favorite songs—the father singing the questions, the little ones caroling the refrain, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus," and all joining in the chorus. "Oh, How I Love Jesus"; "Blessed be the Name"; and "I Have Anchored My Soul in the Haven of Rest," a song learned by him during his first trip abroad, were also among the favorites. As the children grew older, he enjoyed having the family gather around the piano to sing; he would usually call for "Old Folks at Home" and "Old Kentucky Home," his favorite secular songs. He enjoyed hearing his daughters play the piano; and, though frequently not in the parlor and not supposed to be listening, he would almost invariably remark at the conclusion of the performance, "I enjoyed your music."

Each morning was begun with family prayers. On Sunday a verse of a hymn usually introduced the worship. The Scripture he read in a very realistic manner, often stopping to make comments or to give explanations. The prayers, offered with the simplicity of a child, embraced the needs of a lost world and also of each person present. Never did he conclude those prayers without a petition for the workers

in the foreign fields. The mother would often regretfully assure a tardy member of the family who had not been present during prayers that he was missing his "heritage"; and certain it is that the daily worship exerted a great influence over the lives of the children. While the older children were young, prayers were again conducted in the evening; but, as engagements began to claim the time of both father and older children, a change was made. Before beginning the evening meal, each member of the family in turn repeated a verse of Scripture, after which the father, instead of asking the blessing, offered a short prayer. This custom would sometimes prove a trifle disconcerting to visitors. Some of them, as they heard the verses repeated around the long table—even the tiny tot lisping "God is love"—would forget every verse they had ever known. At times, rather than keep silent, some brave person would read a framed motto hanging on the wall, "God bless this home," or repeat some other quotation which sounded religious enough but was certainly not taken from the Bible!

It was Dr. Willingham's privilege to baptize all of his children, the ordinance for the younger ones, who united with the church after he became Secretary, being performed in the Second Church.

He was anxious for his children's lives to be happy and for them to have as many social pleasures as possible. He let them understand, however, that he would never give his sanction to their indulging in any questionable amusements. Whether or not their "social position" would be affected by their refusing to take part in certain pleasures mattered not. A Christian, he maintained, should never indulge in pleasures which might cause another's downfall. Even though his children's views coincided with his, it was sometimes hard for young people to miss some of the good times their friends were enjoying, and they would at times discuss the hardships of being "good." One argument, how-

ever, always proved conclusive. "It would hurt Father's influence if we did." He appreciated their loyalty and sought to give them all the innocent pleasure possible. He encouraged them to give parties, suppers, and other forms of entertainment and gladly furnished concert and lecture tickets. When there was company, he was the life of the crowd, telling jokes, asking conundrums, playing Filipino—in which game he invariably "caught" the unwary visitor.

He was very much interested in games, of which checkers, backgammon, and chess were his favorites; in playing the latter with his children he was usually the champion. Sometimes in the late summer afternoons he would play quoits with his sons and Dr. Hatcher, who was an expert player and often came down to play with the boys. For several years Dr. Hatcher also made it a custom to take his birthday dinner at his home. The father would sometimes on a beautiful Saturday afternoon in the spring take one or two of his daughters and the "little boys" fishing on Belle Isle. Fish were always brought home—even thought caught with a "silver hook." Other Saturday afternoon outings were car rides to Fonticello Springs or Forest Hill Park; on such outings he was always accompanied by one or two of the family—the larger the number the greater his enjoyment. During the latter years he enjoyed an occasional picnic taken late on a summer's afternoon out at Westhampton or some other near-by park. On those occasions he was the chief merry-maker of the party, entering into the fun with an enthusiasm that was refreshing. The picnics to Buckroe Beach each summer were the only "vacations" he could be induced to take.

Summer or winter, day in and day out, there was one diversion which never lost its charms for him—calling one or two of the family, he would set out for a walk. His eldest daughter, now Mrs. J. W. Downer, who was an especially charming companion for him on many of these walks, writes:



“Father had a great habit of taking walks. Any time of day or night he was apt to be ‘inspired’ or impelled to take a little walk or maybe a longer one. He liked company, and much sweet intercourse between father and mother and between father and children was had on these walks. He and we would come back home refreshed in body, mind, and soul.

“We all took them with him. We had little heart-to-heart talks with him at such times. We have been with him when he was tired and oppressed, and when he was jolly and bubbling over with fun and mischief or frolic or good cheer. A visit to a patient in a hospital, or to the sick at their homes, or a pop-call to tell someone of having seen his or her relatives or friends on his last Convention trip; to view the store windows on Broad Street; to ascertain if the fountains in Monroe Park or Capitol Square were frozen; to see how much progress had been made on some house or structure in progress of building; to find out if the old James River was flowing along in the same old place; or maybe just to go somewhere and come back and see how long it took to do it,—such things were objects of our walks. We went with him on errands of sadness and of gladness, and sometimes just to work off some of his ‘badness’! We can’t even think much about father without mingled tears and smiles!

“At nightfall on the last day of the year, 1906, father and I were walking together on Broad Street. I was living away from Richmond at that time, but was at home for the holidays. As we walked rapidly, some rectangular bronze-colored clocks in the show window of a store caught his eye. ‘Corneille,’ said he, ‘have you a good clock?’ I had to acknowledge mine had defects; it stopped upon occasions, without apparent reason, and the alarm arrangement refused absolutely to work. ‘Come back here a minute,’ he said. We went into the store, looked at the clocks, and we both liked them. He handed the man some money, saying he would take one. As we left the store, he said, ‘Now, you can take this clock along as my New Year’s gift. I want you to have a good clock. You need an accurate time-piece to do your work well. A good clock is a treasure, but a bad clock is a nuisance. I enjoy listening to a clock just *keep* on ticking, sometimes, way in the night. When you

hear this clock tick you can just remember your father; and remember *he loves you all the time.*'

"We walked on a little distance, and he seemed to be thinking to himself and said, '*Redeem the time. Redeem the time.*' Then to me again, 'And, Corneille, when you hear it tick, just remember to '*Redeem the time. Redeem the time.*'"

One cause of Dr. Willingham's wonderful vitality was his ability to snatch a short nap. Lying on the lounge after dinner, or simply reclining in his big chair with his feet resting on a chair in front of him, he could fall asleep almost instantly. If time permitted, he would sleep fifteen or twenty minutes; but if he was rushed, he could awake perfectly refreshed from a three minutes' nap.

However busy, he could always find time for small services for his family. The question, "Is there anything I can do for you?" was asked by him several times a day; he never minded doing little things. Gladly would he mail letters, buy stamps, look up information for someone who was interested in a certain subject, or many other little things that count for so much. When one of the daughters was preparing to take a trip, he would make all necessary arrangements in regard to ticket and baggage. All she would have to do would be to pack her trunk and accompany her father to the train, where he seemed to enjoy selecting the best seat for her and perhaps giving the conductor or porter special instructions to look out for her welfare. As a parting injunction he would admonish, "If you need any money be sure to let me know." He was able to accomplish so many duties of such diverse nature on account of his systematic planning. Usually at the breakfast table he would take out his memorandum and make a list of the various matters—official and personal, important and insignificant—to which he should attend that day; at the dinner table he would consult the list, marking out the items which had been dispatched and adding new items; at the supper table, or in

the evening, the memorandum would again be consulted and the different items scratched.

One of the little boys once seeing his suitcase asked, "Are you coming or going?" The fact that he was compelled to be away from home so much of the time caused him anxiety. At times it was hard to leave one of the family sick; and, even when all were in excellent health, he hated to think of placing so much responsibility upon his wife. Before leaving he would often admonish the children to behave well during his absence and to take "good care" of their mother. He would come back from his trips surcharged. How interestingly he would tell of his experiences. At the table or seated in the sitting-room after supper he would relate all the important happenings, now telling of a relative he had seen; of the preachers he had been associated with; of the denominational news; of the great conventions he had attended—here and there interpolating an anecdote or joke which he had heard on his rounds.

It was sometimes difficult for the Secretary, as business-like as he was, to "make ends meet." Dr. T. P. Bell writes:

"He had a large and growing family, and his salary was a long way from supporting it. After a little visit to his home, we were talking about expenses, and he said: 'I would gladly give any man all my salary and \$500 in addition if he would keep my family up just in our present style of living; and you see that I live very economically.' Later he said to us: 'Everything I had when I came here is gone, except just the home, and I think I will sell that and buy a smaller one.' All this time he was resisting an effort to increase his salary. The other Boards of the Convention were increasing their secretaries' salaries, and wanted and urged him to consent to the increase of his; and his own Board was pressing; but he stood steadfast. And it was only after his own means was gone and the cost of living greatly increased, and that large family of boys and girls had to be educated, and the claims upon him for extension of hospitality to many were pressing, that he consented to an

increase. But he always kept \$500 behind the secretaries of the other Boards of the Convention. It was all for Jesus' sake."

His family entered into the spirit which prompted him, but it was not always easy, after everyone had been as economical as possible, to see him, already burdened with the cares of the work, harrassed with the problem of how to keep out of the much-to-be despised debt. When it finally became absolutely necessary for him to accept a larger salary, he wrote to his son:

"The Board has raised my salary. I hated to give in, but just could not get along on \$2,500, and had been for years using up the little reserve I had laid up. The Board would have raised it sooner, but I objected. Everything has gone up here *so high*."

Little incidents which had happened in the home were sometimes related by him in his speeches. The following was often effectively told:

"Not long ago the little boy in my home secured a bank into which he dropped the pennies that were given to him. Every few days he would shake them out and count them as we count our wealth. He knew just how many he had in that bank.

"He learned that my birthday was approaching. He wanted to show me that he loved me, and he purchased a present for me. When I went home, worried out with the labors of the day, the boy came running in and put something in my lap. 'Look at that,' he said, 'it's a present for you.' I took him in my arms and gave him a hug and a kiss, and when he went out I took that bank, and you may be sure it had in it more than it ever had before. I love to think that in such a way as that God deals with us."

Dr. Willingham's third son, Ben, now a physician in North Carolina, writes the following interesting reminiscences of his father:

"When his time was not occupied with his pastoral or official duties, father was never happier than when doing

some work about the home, and he enjoyed working more by making those about him work, too. We boys knew that when father decided to rest for the afternoon at home we might just as well take off our coats and get to work. He did not ask so much for speed as for thoroughness. At Barnesville we had a fine garden in which he could exercise the physical man; and it seems to me that our front yard had as pretty and as many flowers as any front yard that ever existed.

“On Sunday afternoons, as far back as memory serves me, mother or one of the girls would play the piano and we would sing songs for an hour or more, in addition to reading, or hearing read, some articles from good religious periodicals. We also had to memorize portions of hymns and Scripture. This custom was kept up in the family as it grew in numbers and years.

“While we were living in Chattanooga, father once accepted an invitation for the family to spend a few weeks during the summer at a cottage on Lookout Mountain. We had a fine time, take it as a whole. One incident happened, however, which I could not enjoy then as much as I do now. My brother, Calder, and I had been detailed to go to the spring and get water for dinner. The spring was about a quarter of a mile distant. Arriving there, we filled our buckets, after which we decided to carve our initials on some near-by trees, oblivious to the fact that time was rapidly passing. In the meantime the others of the family had been enjoying, should I say, a dry dinner—dry in the strictest sense of the word, for there was not a drop to drink. Possibly that was the reason father had such a dry look when he met us about half way home with the water. To our sorrow, he happened to be standing by some bushes with plenty of switches thereon. Suffice to say, after that we did not linger around springs carving our initials on trees.

“Father did not often resort to corporal punishment on us boys for the reason that, when he did, he made such a fine job of it that we appreciated his efforts and tried to behave. I believe he wanted to prove the fallacy of that old saying that preachers' boys are the meanest variety to be found. He did not expect his boys to walk through youth to manhood without being subjected to temptations

to the vice and foolishness that usually beset the average boy or man. He did not believe in the so-called double standard of morals for man, and the single standard for woman alone—he believed in the single standard for both. To that end, he warned his boys against the penalties of vice, spiritual, moral, mental, and physical. It is a pity that more fathers do not give more time and thought to warn and protect their sons against the so-called pardonable vices. More warnings would leave less cause for reproaches, tainted bodies, and wrecked homes.

“One of the home problems that had to be solved was the education of the children. Most of us graduated at the public schools before attending college. Father believed in the denominational schools and contributed generously toward their support. He also believed in the public schools as a good, broad, academic foundation for an education. Inasmuch as the family was larger in number than the average, to get the different ones a college education meant a necessary cut in family expenses somewhere. The boys were each taken out of school for a year that they might learn the business side of an education and at the same time earn money with which to assist in paying their tuition later at college. Father decided that to give his children the educational advantages he desired, he would have to allow his life insurance to lapse and put what would otherwise have gone into payment of premiums into the payment of tuition. He believed that his children would be better off with educated brains than with a life insurance policy payable at his death. As his children grew up and moved away into other localities, to pursue their different vocations, his interest in them continued. Very regularly did he write, letting us know of his love and of those at home, and inviting our confidences. He tried to help each of us in our difficulties.”

He was very much interested in the children's professional and business careers. His eldest son became a banker; the second a missionary; the third a physician; and the fourth a business man. The youngest has not yet completed his education. In every way possible he sought to aid and encourage them in their chosen lines. Harris some-

times tells of the stimulus he received from his father's remark, "I believe in you, my boy." It was a great grief to Dr. Willingham when his missionary son was compelled to return to America on account of his wife's ill-health. In every way possible he showed his fatherly love during the years of her sickness and suffering. Before his death it was his privilege to see his son return to Japan.

Much could be written of his letters to his children. However busy, he could snatch time to write two or three a week to those who were away from home. His letters were brief, frequently not a page; but they contained all the news. They were also overflowing with love. Such words as the following constantly assured the absent one of his affection:

"I am hungry to see you."

"I have sent you several letters of late and have nothing special to communicate, except that we love you, and are anxiously awaiting your return."

He would sometimes have a letter awaiting a person arriving at a strange place. The following letter was written a year or two before his death to his son, Harris, who moved from Albany, Georgia, to DeWitt:

"I am *very busy*, but love you much.

"Just a word of good morning and love."

"This is to meet and greet you in DeWitt. Remember my three words, *Integrity, Industry and Cheerfulness*. Let your word be as good as your bond. Be scrupulously honest and true. Then stick to your business. Work hard—finish your tasks. It is well to *finish* what you begin.

"Try to keep *cheerful*. The world loves cheerful people—God rules; He is watching over us and is providing. You can accomplish more by being cheerful. \* \* \*"

His son Calder writes the following:

"From the time I entered the Seminary, October 1, 1899, until father died, in December, 1914, there was seldom a

week that he did not write me at least one letter, sometimes as many as three. During the first ten years of his correspondence with me, he wrote nearly all of his letters with his own hand, but in later years he dictated many of them to his stenographer. This was especially true of the letters sent me for two years before his death. Soon after his death his stenographer for twenty years, Miss Fannie Pendleton, wrote me: 'I have been thinking how you will miss the weekly letters of your dear father, which he took so great a pleasure in writing. It hardly seems possible that I will not write any more letters to you for him. Sometimes he would say, "Have I written to Calder this week?" and if I said I did not think so, he would dictate a letter to you.'

"I do not suppose that I shall ever realize fully how much father's letters have influenced me. Sometimes they simply recounted items of interest concerning the family, home, or church; sometimes there were flashes of humor in the way he would turn a sentence, or tell a joke; sometimes there would be comments on denominational affairs, or remarks in reference to some of the leaders, as when noting the death of Dr. B. H. Carroll, he wrote: 'A great and good man has fallen. It will be hard to get another man to take his place. They can elect others, but no one of them I know can fill the Doctor's place.' Some of his letters contained admonitions and advice, for he was fond of giving advice. Such letters, with those telling of his ambitions for me and his prayers for me, have naturally meant much to me. Usually he would begin his letters with the words, 'My Dear Son,' and close with the words, 'Your affectionate father,' but sometimes he would vary it, as, for instance, in his letter of September 2, 1911, the first paragraph of which I quote to show with what tenderness he sometimes wrote: 'My Beloved Boy: This is the first letter that I have addressed to you in Japan for over six years. You have passed through many trials and difficulties. \* \* \* While your mother and I sorrow to give you up again, we rejoice before God that you could go back to the work to which you wish to give your life. As you take up that work again, may our Heavenly Father give you strength and wisdom to pursue it for His glory. You will need patience and grace that you may work well with those around you for the advancement of our Master's Kingdom.'



“The last letter, but one which I received from him, closed with the following paragraph: ‘I am trying to recite over and over the 27th Psalm. I have used this so much in years past to encourage other people; I want to use it now for myself. I know that I can safely trust my case in the Lord’s hands, but I must have faith and serve Him. I have not had implicit faith and served Him faithfully as I should have done.’ (Written December 8, 1914.) Thus as he referred to his favorite psalm, the psalm he read at family prayers the morning I left home for Japan, he gave us a glimpse of his heart’s experiences a few days before he passed on to indeed ‘behold the beauty of the Lord.’”

Dr. Willingham was always interested in the romances of his children; he always enjoyed being “confided in.” Seven of his children married within seven years. R. J., Jr., married Miss Martha Landstreet, of Richmond; Ben, Miss Mary Glenn of North Carolina; Corneille, Dr. James W. Downer, professor of Latin in Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Belle, Mr. Ralph H. Ferrell, who is now practicing law in Albany, Georgia; Calder married the second time Miss Foy Johnson, of Raleigh, North Carolina; Harris, Miss Lynn Lewis Jones of Richmond; Carrie, Mr. T. Justin Moore, who is now practicing law in Richmond.

He took great delight in visiting the married children in their new homes; and they, in turn, considered his visits rare treats. How glad they were after the long absence from home to hear his jolly laugh; to learn the news of the family, of Richmond, and of the denomination; and how they valued his words of counsel which revealed his quick perception of their environment. Fervently would he pray, before leaving, for the “new home established.”

In his latter years, his grandchildren occupied a large place in his heart. Many of the old-time scenes were now repeated. How he would enjoy holding the babies up in the air—moving them up and down to the accompaniment of his singing; pausing now and then to exclaim, “Sing for

your old grandfather?" One little granddaughter, of ten months, who was visiting in the home in 1913 soon learned to accompany her grandfather in the "singing" as he rhythmically moved her up and down; finally she became so proficient that even at the sight of her "old grandfather" she would begin to "sing." As he lay desperately ill in October, the little girl, who was to return to Texas, was brought in to receive his farewell. As she was carried into the sick-room her little eyes caught sight of the big man lying helpless in the bed; instantly she recognized him and again began to "sing" for her "old grandfather." How he enjoyed the little granddaughters who lived in Richmond; every Sunday he must have them come to tea. Frequently did he go out to see them, always carrying in the pocket an apple or an orange, candy, or some other small present. How he enjoyed visiting his little namesake in North Carolina and his Georgia and Texas grandchildren—and, of course, on each visit many snapshots of the "three generations" must be caught.

Among Dr. Willingham's greatest pleasures were his brief visits to his brothers and sisters, and an occasional visit paid by one of them to his home. How loyal those brothers and sisters were to their Brother Bob—"Parson," as they sometimes called him—and how much they admired his devotion to the Lord's cause. They were determined that his sacrifices for that cause should not be too great; and often on opening his mail he found a check from some one of them who wished to share his prosperity with his preacher-brother. Dr. Willingham's father, six uncles, paternal grandfather, great grandfather, and great, great grandfather on the maternal side had been deacons. His brothers did not break the line of succession, as five of them were made deacons; they have long been well known in Georgia Baptist circles for their liberality to many worthy causes. Two of his sons and three of his nephews in the

deaconate make the sixth generation of the family in this office. Two of his sons-in-law are also deacons.

Beautiful was the devotion which existed between Dr. Willingham and his step-mother, the daughter of the late ex-Governor Shorter of Alabama. Warmly he welcomed her into the family and ever proved a most affectionate son. After his father's death his regular letters assured her of his devotion and brought cheer to her in her widowhood.

In a chapter on Dr. Willingham's home life, it is highly fitting that the Second Baptist Church should figure prominently. For eleven years his home was on the same city square with the church; when the first serious plans for the building of a new structure on another location were discussed, he took consolation in the fact that perhaps by the time the plans were completed he would be ready to move into a smaller house and that he could probably secure one nearer the new location which was half a mile from the home in which he was then living! After his return from his visit to the mission stations, he rented a house in West End, which was a mile from the new church. Annually, before signing the lease for another year, he would make a search for a suitable house located nearer the church. He wanted to be convenient to the church in order that he and his family might attend as many of the services as possible and that none of them might find any difficulty in arriving on time. He always wished to sit near the front. When he first became a member of this church, there were no unoccupied pews in the front save those in the "Amen Corner"; the Willingham family were therefore seen one Sabbath making their way to the "Amen Corner," where they occupied two pews, much to the amusement of some of the young ladies in the congregation. After the old building was remodeled, the third pew from the front was secured. When the church moved into its new building several years later, by dint of much persuasion on the part of

certain "young ladies" in the family, he finally gave his consent to occupy a pew which was ninth from the front.

Early in life the children became church attendants as well as Sunday school scholars. Their father was a loyal member; never would they hear him utter a word of censure against "our pastor," but frequently they saw him leading the mid-week prayer-meeting, preaching at one of the Sunday services, paying a visit at the pastor's request, and performing many other acts which showed his devotion to the pastor and the church. Greatly did he enjoy sitting under the ministry of his friend, Dr. W. W. Landrum. The friendship between him and Dr. W. R. L. Smith, Dr. Landrum's successor, had existed since they were at the Seminary together, and during the thirteen years in which Dr. Smith was his pastor their friendship became ever warmer. He felt a fatherly interest in Dr. L. B. Warren, whom he had known from boyhood. Dr. Warren was the cousin of his wife and the son of his former pastor, Dr. E. W. Warren, of Macon, Georgia, and a classmate of two of his sons. Dr. T. C. Skinner, who had also attended Richmond College with his eldest son, he had known as a young man just beginning his ministerial career. Upon arriving in Richmond, Dr. Skinner moved into a house adjoining Dr. Willingham's. The intimacy which was thus established was much enjoyed by them both. Dr. Willingham found great pleasure in the comradeship of his young pastor; he enjoyed their strolls together, their frequent walks to and from church, the conversations they had while seated on their front porches during the warm summer evenings, the calls after the Sunday evening service when the young pastor would run over to discuss the happenings of the day and to find relaxation and sympathetic companionship.

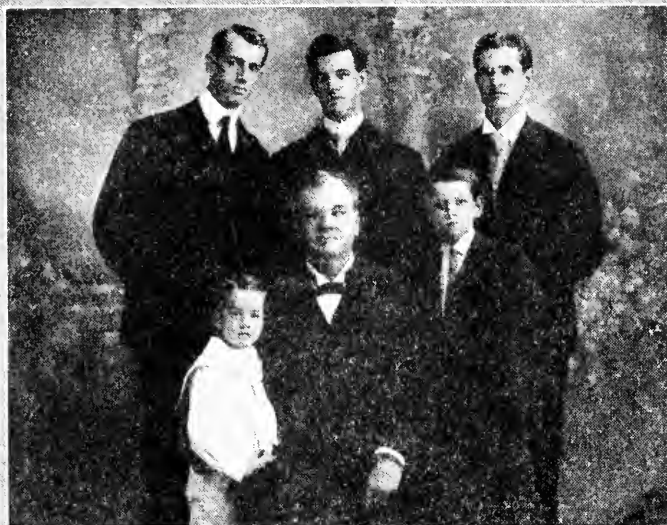
During the three periods in which the church was without a pastor, Dr. Willingham was as a "second pastor." Graciously would he accept the many calls upon him to

preach, lead prayer-meeting, or visit the sick. In the fall of 1910 the church was without a pastor and then again in 1912. During the many years of Dr. Willingham's connection with the church the people had grown to love him with the same affection that is usually bestowed upon a pastor and it was he whom they wanted to marry the young, visit the sick, and bury the dead. It was a joy to him to serve his church; and, however fatiguing his official duties, he was never too tired to render these services.

Realizing how devoted he was to his church and how tireless his efforts had been in her behalf, the people, soon after Dr. Skinner became pastor, planned a way in which to express their devotion and love. On the first Sunday afternoon in 1913 the annual church meeting was to take place. After the morning service, Mrs. Willingham was asked if the Doctor would attend; upon hearing her answer that he had promised to conduct a funeral in Grace Street Baptist Church, the pastor being indisposed, the interrogator seemed surprised and a trifle perplexed. After dinner Mrs. Willingham was called to the 'phone to receive a message that other arrangements had been made in regard to the funeral and that Dr. Willingham must certainly attend the church meeting. In the midst of the meeting he was asked by the pastor to come to the front that Mr. J. D. Crump, in behalf of the church, might address him. In most beautiful language, Mr. Crump, a leading deacon and a special friend of Dr. Willingham's, assured him of the love and esteem of his fellow-members and of their appreciation of his many services, after which he presented him with a bag containing \$200 in gold. Overcome with surprise and emotion, Dr. Willingham could utter only a few sentences of appreciation. Indeed this act was much appreciated by him, not more, however, than other acts of a different nature by which the people, both before this time and afterward, expressed their esteem.

Mention must also be made of Dr. Willingham's liberality. He was an ardent believer in tithing, and his gifts far exceeded the required tenth. In two of his notebooks one can see his "Lord's Treasury Account" from 1884 to 1914. This account was kept with a neatness, accuracy and system worthy of a professional bookkeeper. The last entry, a gift to the Seminary, was made two days before his death. There were many causes to which to give—denominational, missionary, and charitable. Frequently, unsolicited, he would aid a poor Seminary student, college boy, or struggling preacher. As Secretary, he received many calls. An unknown Baptist woman, destitute on a homestead in the West, a woman's society anxious to place lights in their church, a poor church struggling to secure funds for a new building—innumerable individuals and organizations called on him for assistance; and, though he said little of such things, the many expressions of appreciation of his prompt response to appeals, found among his letters, indicate that he never turned a deaf ear to those who asked his help.

Another decided antipathy was that in regard to the wearing of mourning. This custom he considered a relic of barbarism; and the sight of deep mourning invariably worried him. Repeatedly he requested that his daughters should never wear mourning for him. One of them would sometimes insist that her grief would not allow her to comply with his wishes; when the time came, however, she found that she could not disregard his request so often repeated; besides, almost incongruous now seemed the idea of wearing black garments for one whose life had been so glorious and death so triumphant.



R. J WILLINGHAM AND SONS. MRS. R. J. WILLINGHAM AND DAUGHTERS.





## CHAPTER XXVI.

### STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

In rapid succession the years passed by, bringing with them new opportunities and increased responsibilities. On the last day of February, 1913, Dr. Willingham was seated on the train running between Atlanta and Athens, Georgia. As the familiar scenery whizzed past he was writing a communication to the Foreign Mission Board—a communication which it was not easy for him to write, but which after prayer and meditation, he had decided the interest of the work and his duty to himself demanded that he should write. This communication, which he presented to the Board soon

after returning to Richmond, is as follows:

“To the Foreign Mission Board.

“DEAR BRETHREN:—About twenty years ago, without my knowing that any member of this Board had ever thought of me in connection with the position, you called me from the pastorate into the office of Corresponding Secretary of the Board.

“Through these years, under God’s blessing and with your continued, faithful co-operation, the work has gloriously developed both at home and abroad. Our people have increased their contributions from about \$110,000 annually to nearly \$600,000. Instead of 177 workers on the foreign field, we now have about 850. We reported in 1893, 363 baptisms; last year, 4,300. Our God has led us on and blessed us. Hundreds of churches have been organized; schools and colleges, hospitals and publishing plants have been established.

“All of these great interests abroad, as well as at home, need close attention. It is impossible for any man to take the oversight of them all and give them the close, careful attention they deserve.

"After prayerful, careful consideration of the case, I suggest to the Board that the whole question be taken into consideration and such new arrangements made as shall be for the good of the cause.

"It may be that you will think it best to take some action before the Convention meets in May, so I put my office as Corresponding Secretary in your hands to do with as seems best to you for the work. Your unfailing fidelity through the years to the work and to me make me know that you will act with an earnest desire and purpose to glorify our Lord."

The Board, realizing that such important changes as were suggested should be carefully considered before action was taken, referred the matter to a special committee.

In May, the Southern Baptist Convention was held in St. Louis. As Dr. Willingham stood before Southern Baptists in 1913 and read a digest of the report of the Board little did he realize that it was the last report that he would read before that great body. How important a part of his work had been the compilation and writing of that report each year! Into it he had put his best thoughts and efforts. He sometimes remarked that he had never had time to write books but that the reports represented his literary work. Each year he would bring the first copy fresh from the press and present to his wife. Almost twenty years had passed since he had entered the Secretaryship; they had made marked changes in his constitution and physique, but they had also witnessed marked changes in the work. As he reads that report let us listen to a few paragraphs:

"Our God has graciously blessed us in His work during the past year, for which we give sincere thanks and praise His holy name. Notwithstanding many difficulties, we can report a year of glorious advance. \* \* \*

"The great development of our work in recent years creates heavy demands which should be met by us. Let us here make a brief comparison with our work as reported twenty years ago and this year. Then we had no medical

missionary, only a native physician, on the foreign field. This year we have thirteen medical missionaries, seven hospitals, nine dispensaries, and our workers report 65,333 people treated. Then we had 16 schools, with 598 scholars. This year we report 266 schools, with 7,481 scholars. These include ten theological seminaries, with 222 students, and 8 women's training schools, with 191 scholars. In 1893, we had no regular publishing plants. Now we have publishing plants and book houses that are turning out millions of pages of books, tracts, etc. Then we had 177 missionaries and native workers on the field; now we have 846. That year there were reported 383 baptisms, and a total membership in our churches on the fields of 2,923; this year, 4,532 baptisms and a membership of 27,545. That year the missionaries reported \$5,368.42 as contributed on the foreign fields. This year the missionaries report \$89,483.70. All of this goes to show that we have left the day of small things and must come up to the great opportunities and responsibilities which God has placed upon us.

"We hope and believe that in twenty years more what we are doing today will appear small in proportion to what will be done then. Both individuals and churches will be giving enough to support a whole station. In a number of fields the missions will be so organized that the natives will have regular Mission Boards themselves, which will administer their work. The Board in this country will turn over the funds to them, and let them make their own arrangements. We already see an example of this plan in our South China and Brazilian missions. \* \* \*

"Surely we ought to rejoice in a work which brings to us the blessings of larger vision, better education, union, activity, liberality, spirituality, and which helps to save not only the uttermost parts of the earth, but us and our children from selfishness and sordidness. The prosecution of world-wide missions brings the richest blessings, and of these none is greater than the abiding presence of our Lord."

Later in the sessions the report of the Committee on "Finances of the Foreign Board" was heard. The committee recommended that the staggering debt of \$76,400 which hung over the Board should be liquidated and that the

Board be requested to plan its work for the ensuing year on the same basis on which it had worked the preceding year. Several missionaries and brethren warmly protested that the Board must be allowed to advance. Just as the Convention was about to vote on the question of whether they should go forward or stand still, Dr. Willingham was called on to pray. He waited until a death-like stillness prevailed and then earnestly he besought that divine wisdom might be given and that the question might be settled aright. His prayer concluded with the words, 'Lord, take us, break us if need be, but make us Thy willing servants to carry out Thy purposes.' Often his prayers had been answered almost to the letter; this petition, one of his last before the Convention, was to be answered before that body could convene again. The Convention decided to advance.

As Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, Dr. Willingham was appointed on the Efficiency Commission, a commission appointed to make, during the following year, a thorough study of the work carried on by the Convention through its various Boards, with a view to recommending at the next Convention any changes or modifications which would heighten the efficiency of Southern Baptists.

Summer arrived and a trying summer it proved to be. Financial matters throughout the country were straitened and perplexing questions arose in the office, as it was difficult to secure the money with which to pay the drafts for the expenses of the missionaries. So serious did the situation become that in the fall, the Board decided that it was not best to send even those new missionaries whose outfits and traveling expenses would be provided for by friends. Missionaries returning to their fields were requested to travel on cheaper boats. In many respects the summer proved the most wearing through which Dr. Willingham had passed in years. To a correspondent he writes:

“The work has been quite strenuous with me this summer. It is difficult to run a great enterprise when money is short.”

Again he writes :

“I have been quite busy this summer. There have been many questions to be settled and some of them have perplexed us. It is very difficult to carry on the work when finances are in such a condition, but we have gone forward trying to trust in the Lord *and our brethren.*”

There were many invitations for Dr. Willingham to speak in various places, some of which he accepted; others he was compelled to refuse because there were “so many calls” upon him or because he was “so very much pressed with work.”

It was a great pleasure to Dr. Willingham during the summer to welcome into the service of the Board the son of his old friend, Dr. D. I. Purser, Dr. Frank Moody Purser, who had been called to assist Dr. Ray in the Educational Department.

In August Dr. Willingham received a letter asking if he would consider accepting the presidency of a Southern College for men. His heart was still in the Foreign Mission work, but in view of the communication presented by him to the Board, which had not yet been acted upon, he asked the advice of Mr. William Ellyson, in whose judgment he placed great confidence. Mr. Ellyson strongly advised against his leaving the Secretaryship; he declined to consider the subject.

The illness of his eldest daughter during the latter part of the summer caused him anxiety. Casting aside his worries, however, he would drop in at the hospital and cheer her with his optimistic and humorous remarks; and during her convalescence in his home he made the time happy for her and her two little girls.

On October 8-9, the Vice-Presidents from the various states attended the general meeting of the Board. The

change in the Secretaryship which Dr. Willingham had suggested was considered at this meeting; and after careful consideration, it was decided that the affairs of the Board on the foreign field and on the home field demanded a division in the work done by the Corresponding Secretary. Dr. Willingham was elected Foreign Secretary, and the new office of Home Secretary was created, which was to be filled as soon as the proper man could be found.

Soon after the general Board meeting Dr. Willingham attended the Maryland Convention which met in Baltimore. At this Convention he delivered an address on "The Heroism of a Great Missionary"—an account of the life of the late Dr. R. H. Graves, who had labored fifty-six years in China. Returning to Richmond about supper time on Wednesday (October 22), he did not attend prayer-meeting on account of fatigue. This indeed was unusual. The following morning he was busy at his desk. Among other important letters, he wrote one in regard to the trip he was planning soon to make, on which he expected to attend the Kentucky and Tennessee conventions and afterward to speak before the Seminary. Dinner-time had almost arrived when Dr. Ray, noticing that Dr. Willingham was not looking well, insisted that he should return home. By supper-time his family realized that the trouble which had appeared to be a cold was much more serious; and against his protest—indeed without his knowledge—called in the family physician, Dr. W. P. Mathews, who immediately recognized that he was threatened with paralysis. Two days later, while the doctor was paying his morning call, Dr. Willingham left the chair in which he was sitting and walked over to the couch; just after he lay down a fainting spell suddenly came over him. As he began to revive he said, "Well, Doctor, my work is almost over!" His work was his first thought even in the presence of death. The doctor informed the family that the end might come at any moment. Critical days followed.

It soon became evident, however, that he had a good chance for recovery.

How he fought for life, carefully obeying the doctor's instructions not to lift his head from his pillow. How strange to see him helpless—and yet even when most critically ill he planned for those around him. How appreciative he was of the devotion of his family and the many kindnesses of his friends who in many beautiful ways expressed their love. His fellow secretaries were most attentive. The visits of his physician made pleasant breaks in the long days. Dr. Mathews is the Board physician, having succeeded his father, Dr. T. P. Mathews, in this position; and his bright conversation in which he related the news of the Board and the happenings of the world in general proved very interesting to his patient.

The weeks passed slowly by. The trained nurse would laugh when Dr. Willingham would speak of the subject of his last sermon, "Patience," which he had preached on October 5, before the Calvary Church in Washington. He was impatient to get well, but not impatient with those around him. He was indeed very cheerful. He greatly enjoyed hearing "Pollyanna" read aloud, and bravely did he try to "play the glad game" even if it necessitated his composing during the sleepless hours of the night a sequel to the book which had afforded him so much pleasure—a sequel abounding in romantic matches which he enjoyed relating next morning. Especially anxious was he to get well speedily as the wedding of his daughter, Carrie, had long been set for December 18, and he was anxious that it should take place at the appointed time and that he should perform the ceremony.

The first trip downstairs was a great event. As he paced back and forth in the rooms he threw his arms around his wife and daughter Elizabeth and said with emotion, "I owe so much of it to you!" Eagerly he looked forward to his

first walk. Hardly could he await the doctor's coming on the appointed day. Upon his arrival he called his daughter and the three set out, proceeding immediately to a nearby store that he might find out just how much he had lost in weight. The scales now showed 225 pounds in contrast to 250, his weight before becoming ill.

December 18 arrived. Much anxiety was felt lest the excitement of the wedding of his youngest daughter, even though it was to be so very quiet, might prove injurious to his returning health; but a break in his voice and a long pause, in which he sought for self-control were followed by his old-time beautiful and impressive ceremony.

In accordance with the advice of the physician that a Southern trip would be beneficial and the urging of the Board that he take a long vacation, Dr. and Mrs. Willingham left Richmond on the evening of December 19. Mrs. Willingham's anxiety was allayed by the presence of her son Ben who had attended the wedding, and was thus able to accompany them to his home in Wilmington, North Carolina, where they were to visit first.

After two weeks of careful oversight by his doctor son, Dr. Willingham was ready for his trip to Florida. Even to a convalescent, a visit to this state in January and February has many delightful features. He greatly enjoyed being in the home of his uncle, W. J. Willingham, who owned a large orange grove near Arcadia. A pleasant visit was made to his uncle, E. G., at his winter home at Aripeka, where he found excellent fishing. After he left Florida, short visits were made in the homes of several relatives in Georgia, among others his son Harris, his daughter Belle, and his brothers Ned, Broadus, and Paul.

Of all the happenings of the entire trip, none were more happily remembered than the frequent visits of the members of the Sunbeam Band in the little church near Arcadia. The little girls while on their way to school would run in



with beautiful flowers; the boys with partridges which they had killed while hunting. The Secretary always had for them a cheery word, a tender admonition, a pretty card, a shell from the Sea of Galilee, or a Chinese coin to interest them in missions.

That his son might look over his general physical condition, Dr. Willingham paid another visit to Wilmington, after which he returned to Richmond, arriving there on March 15, the day he had appointed while making his plans before leaving home in December.

Back in Richmond—to him that meant to be back at his work, and the morning following his arrival he was again at his desk; his weakened condition, however, would not allow him to remain there long. As the weeks and months passed, he grew somewhat stronger and could remain longer, but three hours or more at his desk each morning exhausted his energies and made him willing to return home. To a friend he writes soon after his return:

“I come down and work a while in the morning, and then in the afternoon try to rest and regain my strength. I find it very hard to get through with the afternoons. Doing nothing is one of the hardest jobs I have ever undertaken.”

Soon after his return to Richmond, the Board held an important meeting. After prayerful consideration, they had decided to call Dr. J. F. Love, of Dallas, Texas, to the office of Home Secretary; and it seemed wise to them at this time, on account of Dr. Willingham's enfeebled health, to reorganize the forces. Dr. Willingham was elected General Secretary. He was to have consultative and advisory relations with the other Secretaries and with all the departments, but was not to be held responsible for any of them. His attendance at the office, visits to conventions or other public meetings, and other activities were left to his own

discretion; and he was affectionately urged for the sake of the work, as well as his own, not to attempt more than his strength permitted. He was assured that his continued presence in the work, even with lessened responsibilities, would be a benediction and an inestimable blessing. Dr. W. H. Smith was elected Corresponding Secretary; Dr. T. B. Foreign Secretary, and Dr. J. F. Love, Home Secretary.

It was a source of great joy to Dr. Willingham to know that Dr. Love had accepted the call to the Home Secretaryship. For many years he had known Dr. Love; first as a pastor, afterward as Secretary of the Arkansas State Mission Board, and, for eight years, as Assistant Secretary of the Home Mission Board, five of which had been spent in the Western office in Dallas, Texas. On account of his long, successful experience in missionary work, and his extensive acquaintance with ministers and leaders of the South, he was especially well fitted for the work to which he had been called. Dr. Love began his services with the Board May 1, 1914.

In every way possible the other secretaries sought to relieve Dr. Willingham of work and responsibility. All in the office were especially thoughtful of him. Miss Fannie Pendleton, who for many years had so faithfully and efficiently served him as stenographer, now took especial pains to render every attention possible. Many of the letters which he wrote during these months were in regard to giving.

May came, bringing with it the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. In this city, thirty-six years before, a theological student, he had attended his first Convention. How often since then had he stood before that great body and stirred Southern Baptists with his missionary message. How strange not to be taking an active part in the proceedings. And yet how he rejoiced that he could once more meet with the brotherhood, and how eagerly he looked forward to the time when he could work in the old-

time manner. As he mingled with his brethren, he still sought to interest them in Missions, even stopping some of them on the street to urge them to greater liberality.

His heart was deeply touched when on his sixtieth birthday he received a large box of beautiful flowers from the missionaries attending the Convention—ever afterward he carried the card bearing their loving message in a notebook next to his heart.

A feeling of growing unrest could be seen among some of the brethren; and, in the discussions in regard to the report of the Efficiency Commission, it was evident that there were some who desired to see radical changes in the machinery of the Convention; such as the consolidation of the Boards.

On Sunday Dr. Willingham heard his friend, the great Dr. Geo. W. Truett, preach. As a fitting close to the impressive service, Dr. Willingham pronounced the benediction—his last public words during a Southern Baptist Convention.

The journey both to and from Nashville was made more pleasant by the companionship and kindnesses of Dr. George W. McDaniel, who during his pastorate at the First Church had been so devoted a friend.

Summer arrived. The problem of interesting Dr. Willingham while not in the office had been in a measure solved soon after his return by the purchase of a horse and buggy—a gift of two of his brothers. When a young man and while a pastor, he had always owned a horse, and it was a pleasure to have another after so many years; he would often tire, however, of spending so many hours in what seemed a useless occupation. His strength had not returned as he had expected, and, as each season he would be assured that the weather of the next season might be more favorable to his health, he began to put less confidence in the prediction. He never gave up hope, however. If he had

for one moment believed that he could never be strong again, he would have resigned as secretary immediately, and then indeed, no longer in the work which for so many years had been the passion of his life, he would have died of a broken heart. Bravely he fought for health and strength. He was during all these months remarkably cheerful. As of old, one of his greatest joys was attending the services of the church. He was always present in the morning, and it was with difficulty he was persuaded to remain away from some of the evening services.

For several weeks during the summer Dr. Willingham found diversion in the thought of moving. Only one daughter and one son were unmarried, and a smaller and more convenient home had been found on Grove Avenue. Every afternoon he must drive by the "residence" and perhaps again in the evening stroll past. When moving day arrived, he enjoyed superintending a big job once more. He was not destined to live long in that home, but the pleasure which he derived from the bright sunshiny rooms amply repaid for all the trouble involved. A beautiful friendship sprang up between him and a near-by neighbor—Etta Whitehead, the little granddaughter of Dr. Whitsitt.

Fall came and went. He had hoped to be able to attend the State Convention, but his strength had not returned. Often now he must turn for comfort and spiritual strength to Psalm 27, that Psalm which he had so often recommended to others in time of trouble. A stranger once spoke to Edward, the youngest son, as he was on his way to the High School. "Do you know," he said, "I think one of the bravest things I ever saw is the sight of your father going to work every morning."

Dr. Love writes:

"To me the most beautiful months in Dr. Willingham's life were those closing months of it, when, under great

physical disability, he struggled on for the cause which through the years had claimed his splendid life, and which, very probably, ended it. I count myself fortunate and feel that I received a consecration for my present tasks and responsibilities by the fellowship which I had with him during those months. Although he could not concentrate his powers upon the problems of the work for a long period at a time, yet let it be known that his interest never abated for a moment, and that he was indispensable to the work to the last hour of his life. Every morning during those months of trembling and decline he would come to the Mission Rooms, give us his counsel, dispatch some part of the work himself, and before leaving call us together for prayer. His passion for Foreign Missions was undying and his devotion to it lasted as long as breath lasted. No man who witnessed his continued deep concern for it, amidst great physical weakness, can ever think indifferently of this cause, or take any responsibility which it lays upon him lightly. The greatness of his life, the steadfastness of his purpose and his great love for Foreign Missions bloomed into rare beauty and fragrance during those closing days which preceded the Sunday morning on which he went to be with his Lord."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE COMPLETED TASK.

Christmas was approaching. To the women and girls of the Southland, Dr. Willingham sent a tender appeal for the annual Christmas offering for China. His heart turned to the missionaries at this time, and to each of them he sent, on a Christmas post card, a loving word of greeting. Before that appeal could be responded to and before those cards could be received, the sad intelligence of his home-going had been flashed across this country and to the foreign field.

The middle of December found Dr. Willingham stronger. In several of his letters he expressed the belief that he would soon be restored to health again. Each morning he was at his desk doing what he could to advance the cause. His great aim was to influence fifteen persons each to send out a new missionary that the offer of the "brother from Pennsylvania" might be taken up. Twelve persons had responded to his appeals. Singularly enough, his last official letter, written December 18, was to his old friend Dr. T. P. Bell. In concluding, he writes:

"You have been a mighty power in this Foreign Mission work for many years past. You helped to stir me on the subject and have been my constant, strong helper through the years. I do not know that any man in our bounds has been a greater power for Foreign Missions than you have been these last twenty-five or thirty years, and now you propose to give your child to the work. The Lord keep and bless you.

"I am glad to say that for the last week or ten days I have been feeling much better and hope that I will soon be on the way to Wellville. With much love to you and yours."

On three of the four last afternoons of his life, Dr. Willingham called on the sick. How cheery were his words to the patients and how tender those to the anxious loved ones! As he was leaving the hospital on one of these occasions, he remarked to the head nurse: "Well, Sister, if I don't see you again, I hope you will have a merry Christmas and happy New Year."

On Wednesday his young friend, Mr. Gordon Poteat, who was soon to leave for China, dined at his home. Dr. Willingham thought a great deal of the young man on both his own and his father's account, and it was a great pleasure to entertain him. Six Richmond College students, sons of various friends whom he had long been wishing to entertain, were invited for supper Thursday evening. Examinations prevented some from accepting the invitation, but those who were able to come seemed thoroughly to enjoy the occasion. And Dr. Willingham, who was on strict diet himself, thoroughly enjoyed seeing the hearty way in which those boys ate home fare. He insisted on rehelping them until he was ashamed, he afterward declared, but still they did not decline. When they were ready to go, he insisted on their putting fruit in their pockets. The memory of that supper as well as the occasion itself afforded him much pleasure.

Friday was the first anniversary of his daughter Carrie's wedding. Before going to the office that morning he dropped in to extend his congratulations and good wishes. In the evening the young couple must have the occasion honored by a little family supper.

Saturday arrived. Dr. Willingham went to his office, but dictated only a few personal letters. In the afternoon the others in the home were busy tying up their packages for the various out-of-town members of the family. All of his preparations had been made for Christmas. Nothing remained to be done. Even the janitor and elevator man

at the office had been remembered. Gladly he assisted the others in wrapping the various packages.

In the midst of the preparations he remembered that he wished to send roses to Miss Fannie E. S. Heck, who was ill in one of the hospitals. He had decided to send them in time for Sunday, believing that they would be more enjoyed then than at Christmas, when she would probably receive many. As it was getting late, he 'phoned to the florist, asking that the flowers be charged until Monday and insisting that they be sent that afternoon or evening, and not Sunday morning.

When the packages were finally ready, he and Edward set out to mail them. Before returning home, he stopped to visit a friend who had just returned from a Northern sanitarium. "I just couldn't sleep tonight without having seen you!" he exclaimed as he entered the door.

He awoke early Sunday morning. When Mrs. Willingham later remonstrated with him for not having called her, he replied, "I have been lying here praying."

At prayers that morning, he read the Sunday school lesson for the day, Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11. As he read of the Ascension of the Saviour, little did his loved ones dream that on that very day he too would be taken to heaven. How fitting that the last Scripture read by him should be the Saviour's command that his disciples should be his witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth.

As he left for Sunday school, he remarked to his wife, who had accompanied him to the door, that he would give the package he was carrying to the "White Christmas" offering in the main school and contribute also to the Orphanage contribution which the Business Men's Bible Class was to make. With laughing remarks to his wife, who had called him back for her usual farewell kiss, he left for Sunday school, accompanied by Edward.



Feeling ill before he reached the Second Church, he stopped at the Jefferson Hotel, which was on the next block. His daughter, who was at Sunday school, soon heard of his illness and was quickly at his side. His pastor and several friends from the Second Church gathered around him, anxious to lend any assistance possible. Dr. J. McCaw Tompkins, who had previously attended him during Dr. Mathews' absence from the city, was quickly summoned, and Mrs. Willingham was sent for. As soon as the physician arrived, Dr. Willingham was carried to a room which the management had kindly and promptly offered. Soon Robert came in. The doctor applied treatment to which the patient seemed to respond. The friends who had assisted in carrying him to the room quietly slipped away. J. D. Crump and William Ellyson lingered, but finally believing his recovery was assured were ready to leave. Seeing them at the door, Dr. Willingham exclaimed: "Well, Doctor, you see the best I have—my family and Will Ellyson and J. D. Crump—and," he quickly continued, "I have the best doctor in Richmond!"

He appeared much better, and it seemed that all danger was past. He, however, insisted that he believed he was on his death-bed. Turning to his wife, he said: "I don't owe a dollar in the world except for those flowers I ordered for Miss Heck yesterday." Over and over he would repeat, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and, "Not my will but Thine be done." His thoughts were for those he would leave behind. He requested Robert that in case of his death he would watch over his mother, Elizabeth and Edward, and to his assurance that he would, he replied, "I know you can, and I know you will."

To Edward he later said, "Boy, if I die, I want you to take *good care* of your mother." She was his first thought; he wished her constantly in his sight, and over and over he spoke of how good she had been to him during all the

years. Once he said, "Be sure to give my love to Calder—give my love to them all."

For quite a while he had seemed much better, and everyone believed that, in a few hours, he could be removed to his home, but a change suddenly began to come over him. He was propped up in bed that he might breathe more easily, and heroic treatment was administered. Rapidly he grew worse, however, and almost before his loved ones could realize the seriousness of his condition he sank back on his pillows and closed his eyes. His work must be carried on by others.

To those who thronged the Second Church to pay their last respects to R. J. Willingham, the singing of "From Greenland's Icy Mountain" did not seem inappropriate. In that funeral there was a triumphant note. The services were conducted by Dr. Skinner, assisted by Dr. Hutson, President of the Board; Dr. McDaniel; Dr. Emory Hunt, of the Foreign Mission Society of the Northern Baptist Convention; Dr. Gray of the Home Board; Dr. Gardner of the Seminary, Dr. Landrum, Dr. Pitt, Dr. Smith, Dr. Ray and Dr. Love. The beautiful tributes portrayed a man beloved by his generation; a man who had performed a great work—a work which would live through the years, though he had been called to a well earned reward; intermingled with the grief caused by his death was the feeling of thanksgiving for his life. Dr. Pitt read the following resolutions passed by the Foreign Mission Board:

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MEMORIAL TO DR. WIL-  
LINGHAM.

The Foreign Mission Board has had during its sixty-nine years of history three chief secretaries, all three remarkable men and each of the three fitting in a peculiar and striking way into the period of his service, meeting

with notable success the conditions of the work during his incumbency.

James B. Taylor was the first and served 27 years, from 1845 to 1872. H. A. Tupper was the second, serving 21 years and a little over four months, from 1872 to 1893. Dr. Willingham came to us in September, 1893, and went away on December 20th, 1914, thus serving 21 years and nearly four months. It is touching and impressive at this moment to notice that his term was within a few days of the exact length of the term of his predecessor.

Rev. Robert J. Willingham, D.D., LL.D., died on Sunday, December 20, 1914, a little before 12 o'clock. He became ill on his way to the Sunday school of the Second Baptist Church. It was characteristic of his whole life that he should be stricken on his way to God's house.

Dr. Willingham was the son of Benjamin Lawton and Elizabeth Baynard Willingham. He was born in Beaufort District, S. C., May 15, 1854. In 1873, at the age of 19, he was graduated Master of Arts from the University of Georgia. For four years he engaged in teaching and mercantile business, meanwhile also studying law. At this time there came a great crisis in his life. One who knew him well wrote some years ago concerning this crisis: "On one side lay wide open before him, with his charming young wife, the road to wealth. On the other a gentle call to a higher and holier work. The struggle was long and hard, but convictions of duty prevailed; he turned from his flattering worldly prospects, went to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to prepare himself for the ministry, and became pastor of the Baptist Church at Talbotton, Ga., in 1879." From 1882 to 1887 he was pastor at Barnesville, Ga.; 1887-91, at the First Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn.; from 1891 to 1893 he was pastor of the First Church, Memphis, Tenn. From that pastorate he came to Richmond as Corresponding Secretary of the Board. He took

charge of the work at a time when the treasury was not only empty, but burdened with a heavy debt. The finances of the whole country were out of joint, and four months of the convention year had passed. So bravely did the new Secretary work for the remaining eight months that the contributions to the work that year were increased over those of the previous year. Dr. Willingham soon became recognized as one of the greatest missionary secretaries in the whole country. He saw the work of the Foreign Mission Board make marvelous advance during the twenty-one years while he was secretary. The contributions to the work grew from \$106,332 in 1893 to \$587,458 in 1914. The number of missionaries in the foreign fields was 94 when he became secretary. Now there are 300 missionaries. The number of native converts has increased from 3,228 to more than 30,000 at the present time.

A few members of the Board that received the new Secretary are still in service. All of the members have had the closest, most constant and most intimate relations with him for years. It is not extravagant to say that during all the period of our closest contact with him, he has grown surely and steadily in our respect and love. It is a fact worthy of record here that, though he was a strong, imperious, compelling sort of person, he mixed with these outstanding traits so much of gentle courtesy, of consideration for his brethren and for their judgments, that no meeting of the Board throughout the long period of his administration was ever marred by the slightest disturbance of the close friendship between him and every one of its members. We mourn for him not only as a great, influential and incomparable leader, but also as a brother, a friend, a loyal and ever faithful comrade.

Dr. Willingham brought to his difficult administration work a fund of unflinching good sense, a remarkable diligence,

a firm and intelligent grasp of the varied and multiplied interests that were in large measure committed to his hands.

Of his resourcefulness, his hopefulness, his courage in the midst of disheartening circumstances, his serene temper in time of perplexity, his great love of his brethren, a love so deep, so genuine that it solved many a problem and removed many a difficulty, we cannot now speak further.

No man has ever enriched the life of Southern Baptists more than Dr. Willingham. As a denomination, we are richer in the fullness of our religious life, in the spirituality of our service, in the purpose and genuineness of our fellowship because of his twenty-one years of self-abnegating service as Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board. He embodied personally the world-purpose of his office. Foreign Missions was his one and constant passion. To him, it was the greatest work in the world, and that in which a man could most abundantly glorify his Lord. No man ever heard him speak on this great theme and went away with a trivial view of Foreign Missions. He pleaded for it as a man pleads for a holy cause to which he has surrendered himself with all his powers of soul, mind and body.

Dr. Willingham was, above all things, a foreign missionary. There was ever before him a vivid realization of the need of Christ in all the world. He believed sincerely that men everywhere are hopelessly lost without a saving knowledge of Jesus as Saviour. To the making of Christ known in the remotest regions of the world, Dr. Willingham devoted every atom of strength at his command. His vision of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to reveal to men the saving grace of the Father was even clearer than his vision of the world's need. Hardly ever did he make an address without portraying the divine origin of missions. He became, to a remarkable degree, the embodiment of the missionary impulse.

He held the missionaries in peculiar affection and maintained with them the most fraternal relations. Indeed, he was father to all and gathered into his own bosom their cares and burdens. One of his last acts was to send a card of Christmas greetings to the missionaries. He took peculiar delight in making this expression of his affection and thought for the dear workers at the front.

In the year 1907, after he had been Secretary for fourteen years without a single vacation and almost without a day's rest, his brethren planned for him with Mrs. Willingham, to make a trip around the world, visiting our foreign fields. It was hoped that this trip would be somewhat of a rest and recreation to him. He was in desperate need of a change. He had worn himself out in his work. But, alas, the trip proved to be anything but a rest to him. With his usual energy, he undertook to travel almost day and night, in order to see as much as possible of the fields. The burdens of the missionaries and the awful scenes of need among the heathen nations seemed to weigh more heavily than ever on his heart after his return home. He plunged immediately into herculean efforts to increase the zeal of his brethren at home for the lost peoples whose desperate need he had seen. The result was that he had his first breakdown in the fall of 1908.

Unfortunately, financial conditions were bad that year following the panic, and for the first time in many years the Board was compelled to report a debt at the next meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. With his dislike of debt and with the consciousness that the burden of debt, which has remained until this day, was hindering the work and made it impossible to extend it as it should be, his anxiety became only the greater and the burden grew more and more heavy upon him. He felt the responsibility for the entire work and was altogether unable to throw it off.

The result was that he became worn out and broke down at the age of sixty, when he ought to have been in his prime.

Among many traits of his great and admirable personality, we must be content to select just one for further notice. We cannot refrain even in the midst of our sorrow, from the expression of our profound gratitude for the faith that was in him. It was so simple, so vital, so real, so great that it was a constant tonic to all who came into association with him. His Lord was always at hand and to Him he went with childlike trustfulness with all his private burdens and public responsibilities. It was the faith of a child in the heart of a strong and masterful man. No doubt tainted it, no interrogation enfeebled it. Daily, hourly, when he was strong and well and when he was sick and failing, this robust and beautiful faith remained. Along with it, growing out of it indeed, came an old-fashioned piety that found expression in his love of God's Word, in his love of God's house, in his love of God's people, in his unflagging interest in and sympathy with every good man and every good cause. This faith was tested time and again in the history of the work to which these long years were given. This work was always first in his heart. Sleeping or waking, at home or abroad, facing the great public assemblies that waited upon his words or seeking God's blessing in the privacy of his room, wherever he went, whatever might be his associations, the great work of giving the gospel to the perishing field his heart and hands. Sometimes this work seemed in peril, not peril of destruction, but peril of damage and partial disaster. No one suffered more keenly the natural anxieties of such a time or saw them more clearly. Yet it was in such seasons as this that out of the welter of confusion and bewilderment his faith arose and shone like a star in the night. Surely the Master said to him many a time in the secret experiences of his soul—"Oh, man! Great is thy faith! Be it unto these even as thou wilt."

The whole story of the remarkable growth of our great work during the period of his leadership cannot be told now. But it ought to be told all over our Southern Baptist Zion. And when it is told through the coming years the majestic figure of this great Christian, this simple-hearted, rugged, devout, earnest soul will loom larger and larger.

We thank God upon every remembrance of him. We pray God's comforting blessing upon the family, upon the wife whom he loved with gallant and surpassing devotion and whose quiet ministries in the home and in his life contributed so greatly to his usefulness and success, upon the children who grew up under his fatherly direction and gracious influence and particularly upon the son far across the seas just where the father would have him.

R. H. PITT,  
WM. H. SMITH,  
J. F. LOVE,  
T. B. RAY.

In beautiful Hollywood, in sight of the James, his body was laid close to the resting place of Hawthorne, Hatcher and Whitsitt.

On the first page of the next issue of the Religious Herald appeared a poem entitled, "To Robert J. Willingham." The poem which had been written by Dr. E. E. Bomar the day before Dr. Willingham's death is as follows:

"Struck at the front on the firing line,  
Wounded and ill—O, chieftain, dear,  
This is the news your comrades hear,  
And they scarce can believe such fate is thine.

"For all thro' the years, by night and by day,  
Daring but wise and strong thou hast been,  
Bearing the souls of us lesser men  
With thine own strength in the battle's fray.



“And all thro’ these years, on the firing line  
We have heard thy voice with its clarion call  
To courage and duty. And high over all  
Has towered that noble form of thine.

“And often we’ve looked at the light on thy face,  
Its strength lit up with the Spirit’s fire,  
And thy manly form seemed never to tire,  
Born as thou art of a princely race.

“No toil of the tent or fight of the field  
Seemed heavy to thee. We let thee bear  
Our burdens of thought and toil and care,  
For we did not think thy strength could yield.

“You wounded and worn? Oh, loving soul  
With the lion heart, from over the sea  
And in thy own land, a thousand for thee  
Are praying this day, ‘God make him whole!’”

In the January issue of the *Foreign Mission Journal* appeared the last words of R. J. Willingham written for publication. These words, which he dictated just a day or two before his death, are as follows:

“Many of the readers of the *Journal* will get this edition about the time that they are making their Christmas offerings. While many people have been in straightened circumstances on account of the conditions brought about by the war, a great many have prospered and have suffered no trouble financially. At this time of the year we ought to review and see how many blessings we have received—not simply in finances, but in health and in many ways in our families and business relationships, and it is well to make a thank-offering to the Lord. Our receipts for Foreign Missions are behind what they were at this time last year, but by a general thank-offering all over our land, we could easily restore the amount up to what it was last year at this time and make it go far beyond. The Lord is pleased with thank-offerings that are made for His cause.”

The many telegrams, letters from all sections of this country and from the foreign field, the glowing tributes which appeared in the secular and religious press, the resolutions passed by various organizations of Southern Baptists and other denominations and of native Christians in heathen countries—all bore testimony to the place he held in the hearts of Southern Baptists and in the Christian world. The many beautiful tributes, and other important information in regard to his life and death, were edited by Dr. Smith in a pamphlet to be used by churches and organizations in their memorial services. At the Convention the following May Dr. Willingham was made to live again before Southern Baptists in the memorial address, "R. J. Willingham and His Vision," delivered by Dr. E. Y. Mullins. At the Convention in 1916, Southern Baptists once more honored him as Dr. Landrum, after speaking in tender and eloquent terms of the "Secretary of Peace," unveiled a life-size portrait which, by order of the Board, had been painted for the Foreign Mission Rooms.

In an account of one of the sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention of 1905, the Christian Index publishes the following:

"In closing the services, Dr. Willingham said, not long ago he was called to the bedside of an old soldier who had fought under Stonewall Jackson. As he came to the end of the way, he began to live again the days of the war, and in his delirium cried out: 'Forward, men, forward, men! It's Jackson.'

To Southern Baptists and Christians of any faith who read the story of R. J. Willingham's life, let his parting message be:

"And so to-day if God should call him home, he would say to the Convention, 'Forward, brethren, forward, brethren! It's Christ, it's Christ!'"

"Forward, brethren, forward, brethren. It's Christ, it's Christ!"











